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Man City beat struggling Wolves 2-1

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Bomb threats to 25 flights send airports into a tizzy

Hundreds of flyers troubled as 100 flights get threats in 1 wk

MUMBAI/NEW DELHI, 20 OCT

As many as 25 flights of Indian airlines received bomb threats on Sunday, causing hardships to hundreds of passengers and forcing authorities to move scores of planes to isolation bays at airports concerned for detailed checks.

The developments came a day after more than 30 flights of various Indian carriers received bomb threats. This week, nearly 100 flights received threats sending security agencies into a tizzy. The threats later turned out to be hoaxes.

Six flights each of IndiGo, Vistara, Air India and Akasa Air, and at least one flight of Air India Express received the threats on Sunday, according to sources.

An IndiGo spokesperson said flights 6E 58 (Jeddah to Mumbai), 6E87 (Kozhikode to Dammam), 6E11 (Delhi to Istanbul), 6E17 (Mumbai to Istanbul), 6E133 (Pune to Jodhpur) and 6E112 operating (Goa to Ahmedabad) got the threats.

On Sunday, a handle on social media platform X that had issued bomb threats to some flights was blocked **PHOTO: PTI**

Vistara said it got security threats for six flights -- UK25 (Delhi to Frankfurt), UK106 (Singapore to Mumbai), UK146 (Bali to Delhi), UK116 (Singapore to Delhi), UK110 (Singapore to Pune) and UK107 (Mumbai to Singapore).

Security alerts were received for six Akasa Air flights -- QP1102 (Ahmedabad to Mumbai), QP 1378 (Delhi to Goa), QP 1385 (Mumbai to Bagdogra), QP 1406 (Delhi to Hyderabad), QP 1519 (Kochi to Mumbai) and QP 1526 (Lucknow to Mumbai). An Air India Express flight IX481 from Kochi to Dammam received the bomb threat and the flight landed safely at Dammam, the sources said. *—PTI*

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B'luru airport gets 12 bomb threats in a day

Bengaluru, 20 Oct

Bengaluru Airport Command Centre was on high alert on Sunday after receiving a bomb threat via an anonymous account on X. The message claimed that 12 bombers were spread across six IndiGo flights, specifically IX233, IX375, IX481, IX383, IX549 and IX399. Authorities initiated a thorough investigation and implemented heightened security measures throughout the airport.

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CRUDE BOMB SUSPECTED

Panic in Delhi as explosion rocks CPRF school

A CCTV visual shows the moment of the blast **PHOTO: SCREENGRAB**

NEW DELHI, 20 OCT

A loud explosion near a CRPF school in the Prashant Vihar area in Rohini on Sunday morning sparked a security alert in the national capital. No one was injured in the blast which initial investigation suggests could have been caused by a crude bomb, officials said.

Parents of school-going children, though relieved that it happened on a Sunday, couldn't help but wonder what could have been.

Teams from National Investigation Agency (NIA), National Security Guard (NSG), Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and Delhi Police cordoned off the area and forensic experts collected samples from the site to ascertain the cause of the explosion, which was reported at around 7.50am.

Police said a school wall, nearby shops and a car were damaged. Security has already been stepped up in Delhi due to the festival season.

Plumes of smoke could be seen billowing from the spot in purported videos. Also, two cars were parked near the explosion site and some two-wheelers passed by seconds before the explosion. Residents said the explosion was "intense" and there was a foul smell in the area after it.

Forensic experts found a suspicious "white powder" at the spot and have sent it to the laboratory. They also collected soil samples from the site, according to officials. "The white powder could be a mixture of ammonium nitrate and chloride. There was a foul smell of chemicals after the blast," a police officer said. Delhi Police said it is checking the CCTV footage of the spot and collecting mobile network data to identify people who were present nearby when the explosion happened. NSG commandos have deployed robots to scour the entire area for any explosive materials. Fire Services said they received a call regarding a blast "near the boundary wall" of the school. Police said they received a PCR call at 7.47 am regarding a loud blast. *—PTI*

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'ISI uses social media to recruit in J&K'

Srinagar, 20 Oct

In a concerning shift in tactics, Pakistan's intelligence agency and terror groups are trying to ramp up recruitment efforts in Jammu and Kashmir through digital platforms, as direct interactions become increasingly difficult due to heightened security measures, officials said on Sunday. These groups are now primarily using social media platforms and messaging apps such as X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp and Telegram to target vulnerable youth, according to an official. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 3

Kashi set to emerge as healthcare centre: PM

VARANASI, 20 OCT

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday hit out at previous governments for neglecting eastern Uttar Pradesh and said Kashi's identity has for long been that of a centre of religion and spirituality but it will now emerge as a big centre of healthcare. He was addressing the inauguration ceremony of the RJ Sankara Eye Hospital in his Varanasi Lok Sabha constituency. "For a long time, Kashi's identity has been that of a centre of religion and spirituality but now, it is also set to emerge as a big centre of healthcare with various top-of-the-line health treatment facilities now available in Varanasi," he said. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 3

Kiwis humble India as they win 1st Test in 36 years in India

BENGALURU, 20 OCT

New Zealand survived a hostile Jasprit Bumrah spell to foil India's attempt to add a final-day twist to an absorbing series-opener, slaying the cricketing giants at home by eight wickets and ending a 36-year long wait to taste Test success in the country, here Sunday

India loosened their grip somewhat but continued to lead the World Test Championship standings, despite suffering an eight-wicket defeat. India's percentage dropped to 68.06 percent after the humbling experience in Bengaluru, and they will now look to get their act together before the two Tests. *—PTI*

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POCSO case filed against Ekta Kapoor and mom

MUMBAI, 20 OCT

Producer Ekta Kapoor and her mother Shobha Kapoor have landed in legal trouble. A case has been filed against them under the POCSO Act for allegedly showing inappropriate scenes involving minor girls in an episode of the ALT Balaji's web series 'Gandi Baat'. The case is related to season 6 of the web series 'Gandi Baat' on the OTT platform 'Alt Balaji'. It is written in the complaint that this series, which streamed on 'Alt Balaji' between February 2021 and April 2021, showed obscene scenes of minor girls. However, this controversial episode is not currently streaming on this app. *—ANI*

CITY ROADS TURN RIVERS

Heavy rainfall on Sunday caused severe waterlogging near RV Engineering College on Mysuru Road, disrupting traffic movement in Bengaluru **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD** >>>More on Page 2

12 OF FAMILY KILLED IN R'THAN TEMPO COLLISION

JAIPUR, 20 OCT

Eight children among 12 people of a family died in a collision between a bus and tempo in Rajasthan's Dholpur, police said on Sunday.

Bari SHO Shivlahari Meena said the accident took place on Saturday when a speedy sleeper coach bus going towards Jaipur from Gwalior hit the tempo near Sumipur.

The victims, residents of Kareem Gumvat colony, belonged to the same family and were returning from a wedding function in Barauli village. Those killed are Irfan alias Bunty , 38; his wife Julie, 34; daughter Asma, 14; son Salman, 8; Parveen, 32; Zareena, 35; Saqir, 6; Sanif, 9; Ajaan, 5; Aashiyaana, 10; Sufi, 7; and Danish, 10. One person got injured in the accident.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi eannounced an ex-gratia of Rs 2 lakh from Prime Minister's National Relief Fund for the next of kin of each of the deceased. *—PTI*

500 booked in Bihar after protests on communal post

MUZAFFARNAGAR, 20 OCT

Over 500 to 700 people were booked after protests erupted in Bihar's Budhana over rumours that a youth arrested for allegedly making an "objectionable" social media post against Islam had been released by police, officials said on Sunday, adding that security has been tightened in the town.

The protesters were booked for allegedly raising "objectionable slogans", spreading rumours and pelting stones at the shop of Nikhil Tyagi, they said. Tyagi was arrested on Saturday over his alleged "objectionable comments" while protesters blocked the Kandhla road in Budhana when they heard that he released by the police, officials said. Hundreds of people who had gathered for the protest were booked for allegedly violating the model code of conduct and prohibitory orders in Muzaffarnagar that has been enforced in view of the bypolls in Meerapur. Police conducted a flag march in Budhana and tightened security in the area. Additional police forces have been deployed in the town as a precautionary measure.

Superintendent of Police (rural) Aditya Bansal told reporters in Muzaffarnagar on Sunday that police have registered a case against Tyagi and arrested him on the complaint lodged by Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind city president Mufti Nazeer Ahmed. Bansal said some people, angered by rumours of his release, held protests. *—PTI*

The protesters were booked for raising objectionable slogans **PHOTO: PTI**

BJP retains 71 MLAs in 1st list for Maharashtra polls

MUMBAI, 20 OCT

BJP retained 71 sitting MLAs in the first list of 99 candidates for the forthcoming Maharashtra Assembly polls and also fielded kin of some regional satraps including Congress-turned-BJP politician Ashok Chavan's daughter.

Deputy CM Devendra Fadnavis, state BJP president Chandrashekhar Bawankule, Assembly speaker Rahul Narwekar, ministers Girish Mahajan, Sudhir Mungantiwar, and Chandrakant Patil, are among the prominent faces feature in the first list released on Sunday.

The list includes 13 women candidates. The saffron party has dropped three MLA.

Fadnavis is renominated from home turf Nagpur South West, Narwekar from Colaba in south Mumbai, and ministers Sudhir Mungantiwar, Girish Mahajan, and Chandrakant Patil from Ballarpur, Jamner, and Kothrud constituencies, respectively.

Mungantiwar had unsuccessfully contested the Lok Sabha election from Chnadrapur, which he lost to his nearest Congress rival.

Out of 16 MLAs of BJP in Mumbai, the party has renominated 14 in the first list.

The list also includes Mumbai BJP President Ashish Shelar, fielded from the Vandre West seat, and senior party leader and Lok Sabha member Narayan Rane's son Nitesh Rane, renominated from Kankavli. Perhaps the most high-profile candidate is Srijaya Chavan, daughter of former Congress politician Ashok Chavan. She will make her electoral debut from the Bhokar, represented by her father, in Nanded. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 3

TROUBLE FOR SADHGURU

Ex-workers allege sexual abuse at Isha

HYDERABAD, 20 OCT

Two former employees of the Jaggi Vasudev-run Isha Foundation on 17 October alleged that the foundation is a hub of child sexual abusers under the guise of spirituality. Following this an advocate S Vanchinathan on Saturday filed a complaint at the Anna Nagar Police Station in Madurai demanding action against the Isha Foundation

Satya Narendra Ragani and Yamini Ragani, a US-returned couple from Andhra Pradesh's Rajahmundry, in a press conference alleged that the educational institutions run by the Isha Foundation are run arbitrarily without adhering to any system.

Sadhguru **PHOTO: PTI**

Ragini claimed that the foundation's schools, including Isha Vidya, Isha Sanskruti, and Isha Home School, lacked oversight, placing children in danger.

Ragani alleged that her son, a former student of Isha Home School, was a victim of abuse. The couple shared accounts of other children being mistreated, including an eight-year-old girl who endured multiple sexual abuses at the hands of the physical education teacher

Narendra also claimed that the Isha Sanskriti School's adolescent girls are forced to participate in certain rituals bare-chested. "Even if the children died, these things were hidden. The death of a 16-year-old boy studying in class 12 on 21 June, 2024 was also kept a secret," said Yamini. Since 2016, six individuals have reportedly gone missing from the Isha Foundation's premises in Coimbatore, according to disclosures made by Tamil Nadu police to the Madras High Court. Supreme Court on Friday closed proceedings in an illegal confinement against Isha Foundation. *—Agencies*

6 flights get bomb threats in Bengaluru

City airport on alert; Belagavi airport gets hoax threat

BENGALURU/ BELAGAVI, 20 OCT

Bengaluru Airport Command Centre was on high alert on Sunday after receiving a bomb threat via an anonymous account on X. The message claimed that 12 bombers were spread across six IndiGo flights, specifically IX233, IX375, IX481, IX383, IX549 and IX399.

Authorities initiated a thorough investigation and implemented heightened security measures throughout the airport. Despite being notified, IndiGo has not filed a formal complaint. However, the airline confirmed that it is cooperating with authorities and is taking the threats seriously.

IndiGo's statement highlighted that the safety and security of its passengers and crew are their highest priorities. The flights from Kozhikode, Delhi, Goa, Pune, Jeddah, and Mumbai were affected.

The alarming day was not an isolated incident as over 20 Indian airline flights received similar bomb threats. This follows an incident on Saturday, when an Alliance Air flight from Kochi to Bengaluru was diverted due to a bomb threat received via Twitter.

PHOTO: HOK.COM

Notably, Kempegowda International Airport in Bengaluru dealt with hoax bomb threats in the past, including two incidents reported in May and August of this year.

Bomb threat received by Belagavi airport is 'hoax'

Police said that the bomb threat email received by the Belagavi airport at Sambra here on Sunday was a "hoax". According to official sources, airport Director S Thiagarajan received an email indicating a bomb threat.

"A hoax mail was received regarding a threat to Belagavi airport. A case has been registered in this regard in Marial Police Station," Belagavi Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Rohan Jagadeesh said. He said, The email is a hoax. *—Salar News/ PTI*

RAINY DAY BLUES

Clockwise from top left: An electric pole is damaged following heavy rains, causing risk to commuters; A man tries to unclog a drain on a waterlogged road near RV Engineering College, Mysuru Road; A flooded basement of Suman Orchid apartment at BEML Layout in Rajarajeshwari Nagar; Traffic moves at snail's pace at Valagerahalli, Kengeri Satellite Town, while a BBMP personnel tries to unclog a drain with bare hands

PHOTOS: MOHAMMED ASAD

ED concludes MUDA raids in Mysuru after 3 days

ED officials during raids at MUDA office in Mysuru ***PHOTO: X/PTI***

MYSURU, 20 OCT

Enforcement Directorate (ED) concluded its raid at Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) on Sunday. ED officials left for Bengaluru with documents they obtained at MUDA office.

ED officials raided the office under CRPF security cover on Friday.

They questioned MUDA officials for nearly 12 hours. The last day of the raid on Saturday lasted for 15 hours. In the last two days,

ED officials have collected all the files related to the allotment of 14 sites to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's wife BM Parvathi, controversial land details of 3.16 acres gifted by Siddaramaiah's brother Mallikarjuna Swamy, who purchased from A Devaraju, land owner of site survey number 464. ED officials have also recovered the controversial "whitner applied" letter submitted by Parvathi.

They have also sought details of missing files with MUDA commissioner Raghunandan.

Letters written by previous deputy commissioner KV Rajendra to the State government were also recovered.

More than Rs 5,000 crore loss occurred to the State exchequer in MUDAs irregularities.

They may also interrogate previous MUDA commissioners DB Natesh and Dinesh.

Though the State government constituted one-man enquiry commission led by retired justice PN Desai probing the MUDAs irregularities, Lokayukta also continued their investigation against MUDA irregularities after filing an FIR. *—Salar News*

HD Kumaraswamy ***PHOTO: PTI***

CONG GOVT WON'T LAST TILL 2028, SAYS HDK

MANDYA, 20 OCT

Launching a sharp attack on the Siddaramaiah-led Karnataka government, Union Minister and former Karnataka Chief Minister HD Kumaraswamy on Sunday said that Congress in the State will not last until 2028. He added that BJP does not intend to topple the State government, but rather that their own MLAs and the people are destabilising its foundation.

"The people of the State and the MLAs will be the ones to bring it down. There is growing dissatisfaction among Congress MLAs. It is not true that we are trying to topple their government; their MLAs and the people are undermining the foundation of this government. Due to the lack of funds, MLAs are unable to visit villages and meet the people," Kumaraswamy said.

Expressing confidence in becoming Chief Minister again before 2028, he added, "I am confident the people will give me another opportunity, and I will become CM again. That opportunity will come before 2028. If the people want it, why shouldn't I become CM? My 14-month administration was conducted under someone else's influence. Even though the government was under another party's control, people have not forgotten the pro-people programmes we implemented. Karnataka is a prosperous State. If I am given the opportunity, I will do excellent work." *—ANI*

Namma Metro completes 13 years in City

BENGALURU, 20 OCT

Namma Metro started in 2011 from Baiyappanahalli to MG Road, stepped into its 13th year on Sunday. It has recorded its highest-ever daily ridership of 9,17,365 on 14 August. 'The launch of the full Purple Line has been a game-changer, adding over 1 lakh new daily riders and expanding the Metro's reach to a total network of 73.81 km. Today, it has grown into the second-largest metro network in India. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on X said that, "The transportation lifeline of Bengalureans, our proud "Namma Metro" known for its superior class of service and facilities has completed 13 successful springs. Our aim is to connect the City to the last mile, in this regard our government will give full support to the expansion of metro network. Our metro service is more relevant than ever in this day and age of increasing traffic in the City. At the same time, I request that the public should also use Metro, the mass transport, more for their journeys. Thanks to all the staff behind this unique service of our Metro." ***—Salar News***

Raitha Sangha to involve youths to work for farmers

MYSURU, 20 OCT

Karnataka Rajay Raitha Sangaha and Hasiru Sene State unit Chief Badagalapura Nagendra on Sunday said that his association has worked out detailed plan to attract youths to involve in association activities to sensitise them to prevail upon the government to work for farmer's interest. His association has decided to rejuvenate Raitha Sangha at organisation level to give fresh impetus by including youths as majority of them keep away from farming activities as agriculture is not a profitable profession to them. Addressing at State Agriculture Marketing Federation Office auditorium on Hunsur road in Mysuru, he said a resolution to this effect will be passed at the State level executive committee workers meeting which will be held on 26 October at Chitradurga. Though, more than 541 farmers organisations are under the banner of Samyukta Kisana Morcha, other organisations held protests over 384 days at Delhi borders. As many as 159 farmers laid down their lives in riot. ***—Salar News***

DK Suresh says he is under pressure to contest bypoll

BENGALURU, 20 OCT

Former Congress MP DK Suresh on Sunday said he is under pressure from party workers and leaders to contest in 13 November bypoll from Channapatna seat.

Suresh, brother of Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, said he along with all Congress workers and leaders from the segment will abide by the party's decision.

"We have held discussions with leaders and workers from Channapatna taluk under the leadership of State President DK Shivakumar and we have gathered their opinion. They have all said that they will abide by the party's decision. There is also pressure on me to contest," he said.

Addressing reporters, he said he will abide by the decision of the party high command and AICC President Mallikarjun Kharge.

"More than a candidate, I'm happy to work as a worker along with other party workers, I have asked party leaders to give me an opportunity. Whatever the party decides in two to three days, all the leaders and workers will abide by it," he added.

DK Suresh ***PHOTO: xxx***

> **We have held discussions with leaders and workers from Channapatna taluk under the leadership of State President DK Shivakumar and we have gathered their opinion. They have all said that they will abide by the party's decision. There is also pressure on me to contest**
>
> —DK Suresh

Channapatna bypoll is necessitated after the seat fell vacant following the election of its representative, JD(S) State President and now Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy, to Lok Sabha from Mandya parliamentary segment.

BJP-JD(S) alliance is also yet to finalise their candidate for the Channapatna seat.

According to leaders from the alliance parties, BJP has ceded the seat to JD(S) and the regional party under Kumaraswamy will announce the candidate soon.

However, BJP MLC CP Yogeeshwara has been repeatedly claiming that he will be the alliance candidate. This even as Kumaraswamy stating recently that there is pressure on him from within his party, to field a JD(S) candidate, especially its youth wing president and his son, Nikhil Kumaraswamy from Channapatna.

"DK Brothers" Shivakumar and Suresh, are hoping to regain lost grounds in the region, after the Lok Sabha poll debacle from there. *—PTI*

No post to Gauri Lankesh murder accused: Shiv Sena

MUMBAI, 20 OCT

Shiv Sena led by Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde has stayed the appointment of Shrikant Pangarkar, an accused in the 2017 murder of journalist Gauri Lankesh, to any post in the party in Jalna district.

Ahead of the Maharashtra assembly polls, Pangarkar joined the Shinde-led Shiv Sena on Friday in the presence of party leader and former state minister Arjun Khotkar.

Khotkar earlier said that Pangarkar, a former Shiv Sainik, has returned to the party and has been nominated as the chief of the Jalna assembly poll campaign.

A statement from the Shiv Sena on Sunday said that if Pangarkar has been given any party post in Jalna district, the decision has been stayed.

Lankesh was shot dead outside her home in Karnataka capital Bengaluru on 5 September, 2017.

A probe by police in Karnataka with assistance from agencies in Maharashtra had led to the arrest of several persons.

Gauri Lankesh's murder accused Shrikant Pangarkar ***PHOTO: PTI***

Pangarkar, a Jalna municipal councillor of the undivided Shiv Sena between 2001and 2006, was arrested in August 2018 and was granted bail by the Karnataka High Court on September 4 this year.

After Pangarkar was denied a ticket by the Shiv Sena in 2011, he joined the right-wing Hindu Janjagruti Samiti.

Maharashtra assembly polls will be held on 20 November, while results will be declared on 23 November. *—PTI*

LOCALS ALERT COPS

Gravel, stones placed by miscreants on rly tracks in Mangaluru

MANGALURU, 20 OCT

Gravel and stones were allegedly deliberately placed on the railway tracks near Ullal here by some miscreants, posing a serious risk to trains passing through the area, official sources said on Sunday.

The stones were found scattered on the railway tracks near Tokkottu about 3 kilometers from Ullal between Kapikad and Ganeshnagar, on Saturday night. A loud noise was heard as a train heading towards Kerala passed over the site.

Initially, the sound was dismissed by residents as vehicular traffic, but further investigation revealed that the tracks had been obstructed by debris.

Upon noticing the disturbance, locals immediately alerted the railway police and Ullal police station.

A quick inspection of the site revealed that stones and gravel had been "intentionally placed" on the tracks, sources said.

The incident unfolded around 8.04pm on Saturday when a local idetified as Padma residing near the Tokkottu Overpass Bridge spotted two suspicious individuals loitering near the tracks.

- Locals have expressed concerns over frequent gatherings of unknown individuals under the overpass. Residents say they have repeatedly complained to the Ullal police

By the time she returned home, a train bound for Kerala had passed, followed by a loud sound. Some houses in the area even reported slight tremors.

Locals have expressed concerns over frequent gatherings of unknown individuals under the overpass. Residents say they have repeatedly complained to the Ullal police, and they are now urging the authorities to take swift action before a more serious incident occurs.

As a precaution, locals have called for the installation of CCTV cameras in the area to prevent future acts of sabotage. *—PTI*

Stones were found scattered on the railway tracks near Ullal ***PHOTO: X***

PHOTO: PTI

CPI(M) leader Achuthanandan turns 101

T'PURAM, 20 OCT

Veteran communist leader and former chief minister of Kerala VS Achuthanandan turned 101 on Friday. in his birthday wishes. "Birthday greetings to dear Comrade VS Achuthanandan," Chief Minister Vijayan said in a post on X. Achuthanandan, a senior leader of CPI(M) in India, entered politics through trade union activities. He was a member of the Kerala Assembly seven times and the 11th Chief Minister of Kerala. He was the Opposition leader three times, served as CPIM party secretary three times, and was a CPI (M) political bureau member for long periods. —*ANI*

MP temple official removed after Shrikant row

UJJAIN, 20 OCT

The Mahakaleshwar temple administration in Madhya Pradesh's Ujjain has removed an official following a controversy over the entry of Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde's MP son Shrikant Shinde in the temple's sanctum sanctorum. Kalyan Lok Sabha member Shrikant Shinde was allowed entry into the sanctum sanctorum on Thursday evening despite a rule against it, sources earlier said. The Opposition Congress had slammed BJP government in Madhya Pradesh over the issue. Temple administrator Ganesh Dhakad on Saturday said that Vinod Chouksey, in-charge of 'darshan' (viewing of deity) arrangements, has been removed from his post for alleged carelessness. Showcause notices have also been served to three security personnel and strict directives issued so that such an incident does not recur, he added. The Mahakaleshwar temple, dedicated to Lord Shiva, is one of the 12 'jyotirlinga' temples in the country and attracts a large number of devotees. —*PTI*

Mumbai police make 10th arrest in Baba's murder

MUMBAI, 20 OCT

Mumbai Police's crime branch investigating the Baba Siddique murder case on Sunday arrested a scrap dealer from Navi Mumbai for allegedly providing a weapon to shooters, taking the number of persons in custody so far to 10, an official said. The accused has been identified as Bhagwat Singh Om Singh (32), originally from Udaipur in Rajasthan who is currently staying in Navi Mumbai. Singh was produced before a court which remanded him to police custody till 26 October, the official said. Police have so far arrested 10 people, including Bhagwant Singh, from various locations, including five from the Mumbai Metropolitan region for providing logistical support and firearms, in connection with Siddique's killing on 12 October. —*PTI*

WB docs' indefinite hunger strike enters 16th day

KOLKATA, 20 OCT

Amid West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's request to agitating junior doctors to withdraw their indefinite hunger strike and come for talks, the 'fast-unto-death' of the medics demanding justice for the RG Kar Hospital rape-murder victim entered the 16th day on Sunday. Taking forward the proposal for talks, Chief Secretary Manoj Pant on Saturday evening invited the medics for talks with Banerjee for "45 minutes" from 5pm on Monday at state secretariat Nabanna, conditional upon the "withdrawal of the hunger strike". However, the protesting doctors refused to end their hunger strike until all their demands were met but agreed to join the talks on Monday. —*PTI*

RSS shaping public opinion in M'rashtra

The move comes after BJP's win in Haryana

NEW DELHI, 20 OCT

With the Assembly polls in Maharashtra just a month away, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) has launched an extensive outreach programme to shape public opinion in favour of the BJP-led alliance in the state.

"Tolis (teams) have been formed across the state and they have started reaching out to people in their respective localities taking the message," a source told PTI.

Each team is holding small group meetings with 5-10 people and also reaching out to families through their local network in 'mohallas' in their respective localities, the source said. "In these meetings, they do not explicitly endorse the BJP but shape the people's opinion through intimate discussions around topics of national interest, Hindutva, good governance, development, public welfare and various local issues concerning the society," the source added.

Although RSS maintains that it does not directly engage in electoral politics, it has long been believed to be BJP's hidden force PHOTO: X

Before the teams were formed, the office bearers of the RSS and its affiliates held coordination meetings across all levels in the state to devise the strategy, the source said.

Although the RSS maintains that it does not directly engage in electoral politics, it has long been believed to be the BJP's hidden force in elections.

Meanwhile, quota activist Manoj Jarange announced that he will field Maratha candidates for the elections in constituencies where the community has a strong presence.

A sub-divisional officer lodged a complaint in Chandrapur after 6,853 applications were filed wrongly during online voter registration. —*PTI*

If we go solo, won't harm INDIA bloc: RJD

JMM says BJP believes in divisive politics

RANCHI, 20 OCT

Expressing its disappointment with the JMM and Congress over seat-sharing for the Jharkhand assembly polls, the Lalu Prasad-led RJD on Sunday said it would not settle for less than 12 constituencies, but would not sabotage the prospects of the INDIA bloc even if it goes solo.

JMM and Congress on Saturday announced that the two parties would contest 70 of the state's 81 assembly seats, leaving the rest for their allies, including the RJD.

"Less than 12-13 seats are not acceptable to us as the RJD has a strong hold on 18-20 seats. If we are asked to contest three-four seats, we are not ready to make any sacrifices," Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) Spokesperson Manoj Kumar Jha said.

Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren with RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav during a meeting in Ranchi PHOTO: PTI

"Our sole aim is to defeat BJP, we will not sabotage the INDIA bloc," he said.

Jha, a Rajya Sabha MP, said even if the party decided to go solo in the elections, it would extend support to INDIA bloc candidates on 60-62 seats.

Last time, RJD contested seven seats and won one. Its MLA Satyanand Bhokta is a minister in the Hemant Soren cabinet. Meanwhile, JMM MP Mahua Maji hit out at BJP, accusing it of indulging in 'divisive politics' and poaching leaders from other parties. "BJP believes in the politics of divide and they have taken away many people from very powerful parties, not only in Jharkhand but also in Maharashtra and everywhere. But it has not benefitted them in any way," she said. —*PTI*

Poll dates BJP's tactic to hinder govt formation: Raut

Mumbai, 20 Oct

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut on Sunday alleged that the Election Commission's Maharashtra poll schedule, which gives only 48 hours for government formation, is the BJP's ploy to ensure the MVA is unable to stake a claim. The Rajya Sabha MP also claimed the BJP was taking proactive steps to keep the MVA from returning to power. "Additionally, ECI has scheduled the polls in such a way that it restricts the MVA's opportunity to form a government effectively," he said. —*PTI*

Kalpana Soren 'dares' BJP to support Sarna code

Dhanbad, 20 Oct

Claiming that the people of Jharkhand have realised the BJP has hurt their dignity, JMM MLA Kalpana Soren on Sunday "dared" the state's opposition party to lend support to the demands of the Sarna religious code, and 27 per cent reservation for OBCs.She said the people of Jharkhand will no longer fall for the "false promises" of BJP."If the BJP has the guts, it should stand for tribal rights such as the Sarna religious code, and recruitment policy, and 27 per cent reservation for OBCs," said Soren. —*PTI*

Kashi to become major healthcare hub, says Modi

VARANASI/KOLKATA 20 OCT

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday hit out at previous governments for neglecting eastern Uttar Pradesh and said Kashi's identity has for long been that of a centre of religion and spirituality but it will now emerge as a big centre of healthcare.

He was addressing the inauguration ceremony of the RJ Sankara Eye Hospital in his Varanasi Lok Sabha constituency.

"For a long time, Kashi's identity has been that of a centre of religion and spirituality but now, it is also set to emerge as a big centre of healthcare with various top-of-the-line health treatment facilities now available in Varanasi," the prime minister said.

"I have just come back after seeing this eye hospital, it is a blend of spirituality and modernity. This hospital will serve the elderly as well as children," Modi said.

The RJ Sankara Eye Hospital is the 14th hospital to be run by the Kanchi Math in the country. The prime minister met with the Shankaracharya of Kanchi before the inauguration. Modi is on a day-long visit to Varanasi. He also announced several development initiatives, including multiple airport projects across the country worth over Rs 6,700 crore. Meanwhile, on laid the foundation stone for the expansion of the Bagdogra Airport near Siliguri in northern West Bengal at a cost of Rs 1,550 crore. —*PTI*

Prime Minister Narendra Modi being felicitated by Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath in Varanasi on Sunday PHOTO: ANI

OMAR RUNS 21KMS

Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah takes part in the Kashmir Marathon 2024, the valley's first international athletic event, in Srinagar, on Sunday. Omar ran 21kms in 2 hours PHOTO: PTI

Congress slams Kerala CM over silence on ADM's death

T'PURAM, 20 OCT

The Opposition Congress in Kerala has slammed Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan by questioning his silence on the alleged suicide of former Kannur ADM Naveen Babu following corruption allegations levelled against him by CPI(M) leader PP Divya.

Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) chief K Sudhakaran and Leader of Opposition in the state Assembly VD Satheesan both questioned why the CM was silent on the matter as he did not even convey his condolences to the bereaved family.

Terming Babu as an honest and good officer, Sudhakaran alleged that the government was dragging its feet on investigating the matter.

On the similar lines, Satheesan also sought to know why District Collector Arun K Vijayan kept silent when Divya publicly made those allegations against Babu. He alleged that there was a conspiracy behind the allegations made against the former Kannur ADM.

Acase was registered against Divya and she was removed her from the post of Kannur District Panchayat President on Thursday. —*PTI*

Union Minister accuses Congress, RJD of Bihar temple vandalism

PURNEA, 20 OCT

Union Minister Giriraj Singh has alleged that members of the Congress and RJD vandalised a temple and its idol in Sanhaula, Bhagalpur, at 5am on Sunday.

Singh said, "Some individuals have vandalised a temple and its idol in Sanhaula, Bhagalpur, at 5am. I have received information that the RJD and Congress are responsible for this. Their aim is to incite riots and make it seem as if this occurred after my visit. I want to make it clear to the administration that the RJD and Congress are behind this. Rahul Gandhi has openly allowed for civil unrest in the country." Earlier Singh claimed that Hindus from the JD(U), RJD, Communist parties, Congress, and BJP are supporting his 'Hindu Swabhiman Yatra' in Bihar.

Giriraj Singh PHOTO: PTI

His remarks followed JD(U) leader Khalid Anwar's accusation that Singh promotes an "extremist ideology," which, according to him, is not conducive to governing Bihar. Singh further stated that he is unafraid of going to jail.

- Union Minister Singh had accused leaders of the INDIA bloc leaders of engaging in Muslim appeasement

Anwar had accused Singh of trying to destroy the social harmony of Bihar with his Hindu Swabhiman Yatra.

Singh had accused leaders of the INDIA bloc of engaging in Muslim appeasement.

Singh also claimed that SP's Akhilesh Yadav's DNA is "anti-Hindu," referencing the actions of his late father Mulayam Singh Yadav, who ordered police to fire at Karsevaks in 1990. —*ANI*

Wayanad second seat for Gandhis, says NDA candidate

T'PURAM, 20 OCT

The NDA candidate for Wayanad Lok Sabha polls, Navya Haridas, on Sunday said the Gandhi family is considering the hill constituency as a mere "choice" or "second" seat" and people of the segment have realised this now.

Haridas said what the voters of Wayanad want is a leader who stands up for them.

She said people of Wayanad had given a mandate to Rahul Gandhi with the belief that he would be with them for the next five years. But when he got a chance to keep Raebareli, the Gandhi scion had abandoned the Wayanad constituency. —*PTI*

NEW TERROR TACTICS

Pak's ISI targets J&K via online recruitment

SRINAGAR, 20 OCT

In a concerning shift in tactics, Pakistan's intelligence agency and terror groups are trying to ramp up recruitment efforts in Jammu and Kashmir through digital platforms, as direct interactions become increasingly difficult due to heightened security measures, officials said on Sunday.

These groups are now primarily using social media platforms and messaging apps such as X, Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp and Telegram to target vulnerable youth, according to an official.

They are using fake profiles and Virtual Private Networks (VPNs) to evade detection.

Once identified, these individuals are drawn into private groups where they are exposed to manipulative content, including fabricated videos depicting atrocities allegedly committed by security forces, the officials said. The officials said, the potential recruits are now being introduced to literature by Sayyid Qutb, an Egyptian extremist whose ideologies have significantly influenced radical Islamist organisations including Al-Qaeda. New recruits undergo virtual training via accessible online resources, including YouTube, before being assigned operational tasks within the region.

Some individuals posing as nationalists are identified as having affiliations with radical groups, including the banned Jamaat-e-Islami PHOTO: PTI

Officials have highlighted a marked increase in recruitment and indoctrination activities via social media, particularly in South Kashmir.

To counteract these threats, security agencies have established social media monitoring units that track potential recruits and neutralise threats in real time.

Some individuals posing as extreme nationalists have been identified as having affiliations with radical groups, including the banned Jamaat-e-Islami, they said.

Also, terrorists are increasingly leveraging encrypted messaging platforms and apps such as Telegram and Mastodon, which are already banned in certain districts like Rajouri and Poonch, for covert communication and operational coordination, they said. The UN has repeatedly underscored the effectiveness of terrorist groups in leveraging propaganda for various nefarious purposes, including recruitment and incitement to violence. —*PTI*

Bypolls: RJD, TMC, AAP announce candidates

PATNA, 20 OCT

The INDIA bloc in Bihar on Sunday announced candidates for bypolls to four Assembly seats in Bihar scheduled next month, three of which fell vacant upon its MLAs getting elected to the Lok Sabha.

The announcement came at a press conference addressed by state Congress president Akhilesh Prasad Singh, his RJD counterpart Jagadanand Singh and leaders of CPI(ML), CPI and CPI(M).

Three of the seats, Ramgarh, Belaganj and Imamganj, will be contested by RJD, while the CPI(ML) will seek to retain Tarari.

From Ramgarh, the RJD candidate is Ajit Singh, a son of Jagadanand Singh and brother of Sudhakar Singh whose election to Lok Sabha from Jehanabad necessitated the by-poll.

TMC announced candidates for the 13 November byelections to six Assembly constituencies in West Bengal. MC won five of these seats in the 2021 Assembly polls, except for Madarihat, which was held by BJP. The bypolls were necessitated due to the resignations of sitting MLAs of the six assembly segments following their victory in this year's Lok Sabha elections.

AAP on Sunday released a list of candidates for the November 13 bypolls to four assembly seats in Punjab.

The bypolls to the four assembly seats were necessitated after MLAs representing them were elected to the Lok Sabha.

In Sikkim, SKM named Aditya Golay and Satish Chandra Rai as its candidates for the byelections to the Soreng-Chakung and Namchi-Singhithang assembly constituencies, respectively. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Delhi's air quality in 'poor' category on Sunday

NEW DELHI, 20 OCT

The Air Quality Index (AQI) remained in the 'poor' category in the national capital on Sunday. According to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) data, the 24-hour average AQI at 9am in Delhi was recorded at 265. India Meteorological Department (IMD) reported the minimum temperature of 20.0 degrees Celsius. Meanwhile, the humidity level stood at 91 per cent at 8.30 am, the IMD stated. The weather department has predicted a clear sky for the day, and the maximum temperature is expected to be 36.0 degrees Celsius. An AQI between zero and 50 is considered "good", 51 and 100 "satisfactory", 101 and 200 "moderate", 201 and 300 "poor", 301 and 400 "very poor", and 401 and 500 "severe". *—PTI*

Man kills grandmom, offers blood to Shivling

DURG, 20 OCT

In a suspected case of 'human sacrifice', a man allegedly killed his grandmother and offered her blood on a 'Shivling' before he tried to end his life in Chhattisgarh's Durg, police said on Sunday. The incident, which appears to be the outcome of superstition, took place on Saturday in Nankatti village under Nandini police station limits. The victim is Rukmani Goswami, 70. The accused, Gulshan Goswami, 30, was admitted to a hospital in a critical condition, the official said. Gulshan lived with his grandmother in a room close to a Lord Shiva temple and used to daily perform rituals at the temple, he said. On Saturday, he killed his grandmother with a trident and offered her blood on the 'Shivling' at the temple. The man returned home and attacked himself with the same trident. *—PTI*

2 UP minors rape 5-year-old, sent to reform home

BALLIA, 20 OCT

A court here sent two juveniles accused of raping a five-year-old girl here, to a children's reform home in Mau district, a police official said on Sunday. The police produced the two boys, aged 13 and 16, in the Juvenile Court of Ballia on Saturday, Station House Officer (SHO) Yogendra Bahadur Singh said, and added that a six-year-old accused in the case was released. According to police the incident took place on Wednesday under Kotwali police station area. Superintendent of Police (SP) Vikrant Vir said the five-year-old girl was raped by the three boys on the roof of her house. The families of the accused lived as tenants in the girl's house, he said. *—PTI*

Father, four others get lifer for killing girl with acid

BAREILLY, 20 OCT

A Special Judge Fast Track Court here sentenced five people, including a father and relatives, to life imprisonment for the murder of a 19-year-old woman who resisted an arranged marriage, police said on Sunday. According to police, Munni was forced into a marriage with Devendra on 22 April, 2023, despite being in love with another man from her village. Additional District and Government Advocate (ADGC) Harendra Singh Rathore said that tensions escalated after Munni's marriage as it led to immediate conflicts with her in-laws. A day after her marriage, her father, Totaram, along with his relatives, took her back from her in-laws' home and poured acid on her, Rathore said. Munni succumbed to her injuries during treatment, he said. *—PTI*

2 houses of village head set ablaze in Manipur

Violence erupts days after talks between Meitei, Kuki MLAs

IMPHAL, 20 OCT

Two empty farm houses belonging to a village head were set ablaze in Manipur's restive Jiribam district, police said on Sunday.

The incident took place in Nungkhal area late on Saturday night when the farm houses belonging to Hilghat gram panchayat pradhan L Somorendro were set on fire suspectedly by militants, a police officer said.

Security forces have reached the spot and are investigating the incident.

The incident was reported after militants attacked a village in the vicinity of the Borobekra police station and charged bombs on Saturday morning, leading to a gunfight with security forces. No injuries were reported in the incident.

The violence was reported days after talks were held between MLAs of the warring Meitei and Kuki communities in New Delhi in a bid to hammer out a peaceful solution to the ongoing conflict.

Jiribam, which was untouched by violence in Imphal, erupted in clashes after a body of a farmer was found in the fields in June PHOTO: PTI

More than 200 people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless in ethnic violence between Imphal Valley-based Meiteis and adjoining hills-based Kukis in Manipur since May last year.

Ethnically-diverse Jiribam, which was largely untouched by ethnic violence in Imphal Valley and adjoining hills, erupted in violence after a mutilated body of a farmer was found in the fields in June this year. Thousands had to leave their homes and relocate to relief camps due to incidents of arson by both sides. A CRPF jawan was also killed in an ambush by militants during patrolling by security forces in mid-July. *—PTI*

Arms and ammunition seized in Thoubal

Arms and ammunition have been seized during a search operation in Manipur's Thoubal district, police said on Sunday. Security forces conducted the search operation in Irong Hill near STNBA Gate on Saturday, they said. During the search operation, a 9mm pistol, four hand grenades, a detonator and 12 cartridges were seized. Besides, four empty magazines, six empty cartridges and a smoke grenade were also seized. *—PTI*

Seventeen people died after the billboard crashed onto a petrol pump on 13 May during sudden dusty winds PHOTO: PTI

Mumbai hoarding collapse prime accused gets bail

MUMBAI, 20 OCT

A Mumbai court has granted bail to advertising firm director Bhavesh Bhinde, the prime accused in the case of a hoarding collapse in Ghatkopar area here that claimed 17 lives in May this year.

Additional Sessions Judge V M Pathade allowed Bhinde's bail plea on Saturday.

Bhinde, through his lawyer Sana Khan, had contended the unfortunate incident was an "act of God", and that he was implicated for "political vendetta".

The hoarding installed in Ghatkopar area collapsed due to "unexpected, unusual wind speed" and no fault can be attributed to the applicant (whose firm had installed it), advocate Khan argued.

It was also submitted that Bhinde was not the firm's director at the time of installation of the gigantic hoarding.

Bhinde has been booked on the charge of culpable homicide not amounting to murder.

The prosecution opposed bail to Bhinde, saying there was enough evidence to show he was actively involved in the case.

Seventeen people, including a former general manager of the Mumbai airport's Air Traffic Control and his wife, died after the billboard crashed onto a petrol pump on 13 May during sudden dusty winds and unseasonal rains.

It was alleged that the hoarding had been put up illegally on railway land. *—PTI*

'FELT LIKE EARTHQUAKE'

Strong vibrations, chemical smell: Delhites after blast

NEW DELHI, 20 OCT

Residents of Delhi's Rohini area woke up to the sound of a loud blast on Sunday. Its vibrations were felt in faraway houses, hundreds of metres away, they said.

Locals said there was a "chemical-like" smell at the site and thick white smoke everywhere as panic gripped the Paschim Vihar area after the blast happened near a CRPF school.

"It wasn't like a firecracker, the sound was incredibly loud. And for 15-20 minutes, there was just smoke everywhere," said Kiran Sachdeva, a resident of the locality.

Sachdeva, in her 60s, described the blast as an "earthquake-like" shock, and said her house was about 200-250 meters away from the site.

Local businesses were affected by the explosion, with the fire brigade, police, bomb squad as well as a team of the NIA and NSG visiting the area to ascertain the cause of the explosion. No one was injured in the incident but the walls of the schools and some shops and a car nearby received damage, according to officials.

NSG personnel conduct inspection at the site after a blast was reported at Prashant Vihar, near CRPF school in New Delhi on Sunday PHOTO: PTI

The usually-bustling streets were eerily quiet, with all shops and kiosks closed and their glass windows and signboards shattered.

Himanshu Kohli, a shopkeeper, said when he heard the blast, he ran towards the spot. He said white smoke filled the air and a strong, chemical-like smell emanated from the site.

"Glass windows and boards were broken. I got scared and returned to my shop," Kohli said.

Parents of school-going children, though relieved that it happened on a Sunday, couldn't help but wonder what could have been.

Anita Singh had just returned from the temple when she heard the "very loud explosion". *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

200 FALL SICK AFTER EATING SNACKS IN ASSAM

GOLAGHAT, 20 OCT

Around 200 people have fallen ill due to food poisoning after consuming snacks during an obituary function of a deceased in Assam's Golaghat district, officials said on Sunday.

The incident took place on Saturday night during a gathering at the memorial ceremony of the mother of Pradip Gogoi at Pasghoria village of Uriamghat in Sarupathar area. According to an official, the guests were served with traditional 'jalpan' (snacks with puffed rice and cream) during the function.

"The people then complained of stomach ache, headache, vomiting and loose motion. A total of 53 people were immediately admitted at the Community Health Centre in Sarupathar town and Public Health Centre in Uriamghat," the official said. *—PTI*

Female cheetah to soon give birth to cubs at Kuno

BHOPAL, 20 OCT

A female cheetah is pregnant and expected to deliver cubs soon at the Kuno National Park (KNP) in Madhya Pradesh's Sheopur district.

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav shared the information in a post on social media platform X late Saturday night and said this symbolises a big achievement for the 'Cheetah Project'.

On 17 September, 2022, Prime Minister Narendra Modi released eight cheetahs — five females and three males— brought from Namibia into enclosures at the KNP as part of the world's first intercontinental translocation of the big cats, nearly eight decades after the cheetahs were hunted to extinction.

In February 2023, another 12 cheetahs were translocated to Kuno from South Africa as part of the Indian government's project to reintroduce cheetahs into the country.

According to officials, 12 cheetah cubs have so far been born on the Indian soil over the last two years at KNP.

Seventeen cubs have so far been born in India PHOTO: PTI

The project has also seen setbacks with eight adult cheetahs and five cubs dying during the same period.

Seventeen cubs have so far been born in India, with 12 surviving, bringing the total number of cheetahs, including cubs, at Kuno to 24 at present, according to officials. *—PTI*

KOTA GIRL SUFFERS ARM FRACTURE AFTER TEACHER HITS HER, FIR FILED

KOTA, 20 OCT

A class 5 student of a government school here suffered a fracture in her arm after she was allegedly hit by her teacher with a stick for not folding a mat properly, officials said.

An FIR has been registered against the teacher, Abdul Aziz. The incident took place at Government Higher Secondary School in Telia Khedi in the Modak police station area on Saturday. The Education Department has also initiated an inquiry against him, they said. The matter came to light when Abid Khan, sarpanch of Askali gram panchayat, where the girl lives, informed Rajasthan Education and Panchayati Raj Minister Madan Dilawar about it. After learning about the incident, Dilawar summoned the 10-year-old. The girl to the camp and she narrated the entire incident, the officials said. According to the girl, Aziz, her class teacher, asked her to roll up and fix a mat.

She claimed that even though she followed Aziz's instructions, he became furious and accused her of not listening to him. *—PTI*

CELEBRATING KARWA CHAUTH

Married women participate in rituals for Karwa Chauth, a Hindu festival where they fast for the long life and well-being of their husbands, in Patna on Sunday PHOTO: PTI

Protests in Bihar after temple idol was vandalised

BHAGALPUR, 20 OCT

People staged protests in Bihar's Bhagalpur on Sunday after idols in a temple were found vandalised, police said.

One person has been arrested in the incident in Sanhaula police station area.

Security forces staged a flag march in the area as people staged protests and burnt tyres on the roads.

"The incident took place at a temple near a pond in Sanhaula police station area last night where idols of different deities were vandalised by some unidentified persons. " a statement issued by the district police on Sunday said.

A large number of people gathered outside Sanhaula police station in the morning to lodge protest against the incident. Locals also blocked roads and burnt tyres to vent their anger. *—PTI*

Minor girl set ablaze in Andhra over love affair

BADVEL, 20 OCT

A 16-year-old girl was allegedly burnt to death by a man, who broke up with her a few months ago and got married, said police on Sunday.

J Vignesh allegedly poured petrol and set the minor girl ablaze on the outskirts of Badvel in Kadapa district.

"Vignesh burnt her around 10am on Saturday, leading to the minor girl's hospitalisation at Kadapa RIMS hospital. The girl succumbed to her burns around 3 am on Sunday," Mydukuru sub-divisional police officer Rajendra Prasad told PTI. According to police, Vignesh and the minor girl were in a relationship earlier but the former got married to another woman. "However, the minor girl got in touch with Vignesh six months ago and asked him to marry her. Fed up by her demand, Vignesh resorted to this extreme action," he said. *—PTI*

Vignesh allegedly poured petrol and set the minor girl ablaze PHOTO: PTI

NEW EXPERIENCES

Arunachal starts kiwi picking, wine making to entice tourists

ITANAGAR, 20 OCT

Inviting to experience the first ray of the sun in the eastern-most corner of India to kiwi-picking, the Arunachal Pradesh government is rolling out red carpet for both domestic and international tourists visiting the picturesque north-eastern state.

At Chief Minister Pema Khandu's initiative, the Arunachal Pradesh government has unveiled a tourism policy with a focus on film (shooting), farming (experience), wine (making and testing) and eco-tourism.

Tourists are invited for a programme called 'Kiwi Owning and Kiwi Fruit Picking Experience' at Ziro in the Lower Subansiri district.

Tourists take part in 'Kiwi Owning and Kiwi Fruit Picking Experience' at Ziro in Lower Subansiri district of Arunachal Pradesh PHOTO: PTI

Under this initiative, tourists are given a unique opportunity to become more connected with nature and agriculture through an immersive, hands-on approach. Participants have the option to own a kiwi plant through an 'Annual Timeshare Programme' designed to create a bond between the plant owner and the farming process while supporting the local farmers. An outdoor music festival named Ziro Festival is an added attraction to the place. *—PTI*

CYCLONE LIKELY OVER BAY OF BENGAL BY 23 OCT

BHUBANESWAR, 20 OCT

A cyclonic storm is likely to form over the Bay of Bengal by October 23, the IMD said on Sunday.

An upper air cyclonic circulation over Andaman Sea is likely to intensify into a low-pressure area over the Bay of Bengal during the next 24 hours, the IMD said in a special bulletin.

The weather system is expected to move west-north-westwards direction, and intensify into a depression by 22 October morning and into a cyclonic storm by 23 October over east central Bay of Bengal, it said. "It is likely to reach the northwest Bay of Bengal off Odisha-West Bengal coasts by 24 October," it added.

Under its influence, the coastal region of Odisha is likely to receive heavy rainfall from 23 to 25 October. *—PTI*

DELHI HALF MARATHON

A specially-abled participant among others during Vedanta Delhi Half Marathon 2024, in New Delhi, on Sunday
PHOTO: PTI

How involved is North Korea in Ukraine war?

North Korea is not only supplying Moscow with weapons but is also sending military personnel to the Russian-occupied areas of Ukraine, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on October 17 in Brussels after meeting European leaders and NATO defense ministers. He said that Pyongyang was preparing to send as many as 10,000 soldiers.

On 8 October, South Korean Defense Minister Kim Yonghyun had already said in parliament that North Korea might support Russia's war in Ukraine by sending troops.

Zelenskyy has repeatedly warned against an alliance between North Korea and Russia, saying that relations between Ukraine and its allies must be strengthened to prevent a "major war."

N Korea's Kim Jong Un & Russian President Vladimir Putin ***PHOTO: PTI***

North Korean ammunition and troops

Sabrina Singh, deputy spokesperson for the US Defense Ministry, suggested in July there was no indication that North Korean troops were being sent to Ukraine. But in 2023, Ukraine's military intelligence service (HUR) reported that a North Korean contingent had arrived in the occupied territories of the country.

Andriy Kovalenko from the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine reported at the beginning of October that North Korean military personnel were supervising ammunition provided to Russia in the Russian-occupied parts of the Donetsk region. He added that they were accompanying deliveries and monitoring the Russian army's use of ammunition.

According to the Ukrainian media, there have even been North Korean casualties. More than 20 military personnel, including six officers from North Korea, are reported to have been killed by a Ukrainian missile attack near Donetsk on October 3.

No confirmation of North Korean involvement from Moscow

Russia has not yet confirmed that North Korea is participating in the war against Ukraine. With regard to Russia and North Korea, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said merely that there "truly strategic deep cooperation in all areas, including security," referring to a defense pact signed between North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and Russian President Vladimir Putin in June 2024, which provides for mutual military assistance.

Pro-Kremlin bloggers have reported on deliveries of ammunition from North Korea and Iran to the Russian army, posting photos from the front. Some have even criticized the poor quality of the weapons.

DW was unable to find any evidence on Russian social media networks that North Korean soldiers had been deployed to Russia or Russian-occupied Ukraine. Posts that claimed to provide proof of North Korean troops' involvement in the war in Ukraine were dubious at best. An appeal to Kim Jong Un that was posted in a Russian-language Telegram chat was written in Korean and signed with the name of the commander of the first motorized rifle brigade of the Korean People's Army. In it, the military man allegedly asks not to be sent to Kursk so as not to fight "against NATO," adding: "We are afraid, it's terrible." Ukrainian troops advanced into this Russian region in August.

Mutual temporary benefits for Russia and North Korea

Andrei Lankov, a professor of history and international relations at Kookmin University in the South Korean capital Seoul, said that it was "quite plausible" that North Korean troops would be sent to take part in Russia's war against Ukraine. He told DW that it would make sense for Putin to strengthen the Russian army with North Koreans.

Lankov, who is originally from Russia but who has been an academic in South Korea for 30 years, said there were fewer and fewer men who were prepared to put their lives on the line, not even for the generous financial advantages that signing up with the army offered. He said what the Russian army most needed now was infantry units.

The second reason for Pyongyang's willingness to provide troops is Russia's offer to pay part of the bill in the form of technology, hinting that North Korea has driven a hard bargain on this point.

While the loan of potentially thousands of North Korean troops suggests a new level of military cooperation between the two allies, Lankov expected the exchanges to be brief.

In June 2024, the South Korean broadcaster TV Chosun cited a source in the South Korean government and reported that North Korean troops were being deployed to support the Russian army. It suggested that three or four engineer brigades might be transferred from North Korea to Russia.

North Korea has already sent troops to support other armies

North Korea has sent troops overseas before. Angola, for example, accepted around 3,000 military "advisers" in the 1970s and 1980s. These troops were tasked with training local troops but also fought against South African forces.

North Korean troops also sent troops to Uganda, Chad and Mozambique, and also trained guerillas of the South-West African Liberation Army to carry out a long-running insurgency against the South African government until the end of apartheid.

Generally, North Korea has tended to send trainers, said Tertitsky, explaining that North Korean soldiers rarely took part in military operations outside their country. Another exception that he highlighted was the deployment of pilots to support the North Vietnamese during the Vietnam War. *—DW News*

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SALAR سالار

Why Sinwar's death will win him martyr status

A discrepancy in the official Israeli account of Yahya Sinwar's final moments has emerged since his death which appears likely to add fuel to the martyr's cult fast developing around the Hamas leader.

The Israeli autopsy carried out on Sinwar concluded that he died from a gunshot wound to his head, at odds with the initial Israel Defense Forces (IDF) version which implied he was killed by a tank shell fired into the wrecked building where he made his last stand.

The IDF released footage of a tank firing at the building in Rafah's Tel al-Sultan refugee camp, and the military spokesperson, R Adm Daniel Hagari, said: "We identified him as a terrorist inside a building, fired at the building and then went in to search."

However, according to Chen Kugel, the director of Israel's national forensic institute, who carried out the autopsy, the cause of death was a bullet wound to the head. In an interview with the New York Times, Kugel did not speculate on who fired the fatal shot, whether it was during a skirmish with Israeli soldiers before the tank round was fired, or after he was found in the rubble of the building, or by Sinwar himself so as not to be taken alive.

Sinwar had a pistol with him, which some Israeli reports said had previously belonged to an IDF military intelligence officer, Mahmoud Hir a-Din, a Druze from the Galilee region, who was killed during a secret mission in Gaza in 2018.

The intrigue surrounding Sinwar's death has fuelled a martyr's cult that spread explosively across social media from the moment the Hamas leader was confirmed dead.

When the long-serving Hamas leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin was assassinated by missiles fired by an IDF helicopter gunship in 2004, he was being pushed along in a wheelchair after prayers in a Gaza mosque.

Sinwar left a war-ravaged fighter's corpse behind, that some Palestinians may compare to the final image of Che Guevara, the Argentinian doctor who fought in Cuba's revolution but who ultimately died at the hands of the Bolivian military in 1967, and became an icon for his cause. After Guevara was shot, his body was laid out on a table to be photographed, his open eyes staring vacantly at the camera.

Sinwar's successors in the Hamas leadership celebrated the fact that he died in combat, in the words of his deputy, Khalil al-Hayya: "Facing and not retreating, engaging in the frontlines and moving between combat positions."

An excerpt from a notable poem by the Palestinians' most celebrated poet, Mahmoud Darwish, is circulating on the internet along with the claim that it foretold Sinwar's end.

The lines from Praise for the High Shadow say: "Besiege your siege … there is no escape. Your arm has fallen, so pick it up and strike your enemy … There is no escape and I fell near you, so pick me up and strike your enemy with me … You are now free, free and free."

Sinwar's warrior's death seems certain to guarantee him the top place in the Palestinian pantheon, obscuring the fact that, before 7 October last year, as a brutal enforcer of Hamas loyalty, he killed far more Palestinians than Israelis, killing suspected informants in the most gruesome manner. Last year's murderous attack on Israeli civilians in southern Israel left Gaza open to ferocious Israeli reprisals and Palestinian civilians exposed, starving and vulnerable while Sinwar's fighters hunkered in tunnels well stocked long before with food, water and medication.

Sinwar's alter ego in the book, Ibrahim, is a zealot committed to the cause who expects Palestinians to be "ready to sacrifice everything for their pride, dignity, and beliefs". Why negotiate with Israel, Ibrahim asks, when Hamas could "impose other rules of the game"?

That is what Sinwar thought he was doing with the 7 October attack, and what he clearly hoped would be his legacy. The myth surrounding him, which he cultivated assiduously while still alive, seems certain to live on through thousands of posters and street murals.

—The Guardian

Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar's successors in the Hamas leadership celebrated the fact that he died in combat on 17 October ***PHOTO: PTI***

More than 50% healthcare workers feel their workplace is 'unsafe': Study

Results revealed that more than half (58.2 per cent) of healthcare workers feel unsafe at the workplace and 78.4 per cent reported having been threatened on duty ***PHOTO: PTI***

More than half of the healthcare workers who participated in a survey feel that their workplace is "unsafe", particularly in state and central government medical colleges.

Led by experts from the Vardhman Mahavir Medical College (VMMC), Safdarjung Hospital and AIIMS, New Delhi, the study highlighted "significant gaps" in the security infrastructure within Indian healthcare settings.

The "Workplace Safety and Security in Indian Healthcare Settings: A Cross-Sectional Survey" published in a recent issue of the journal 'Epidemiology International' underscored the urgent need for improving the prevailing safety and security measures in healthcare settings.

The survey is a collaborative effort of Dr Kartik Chadhar and Dr Jugal Kishore from the VMMC and Safdarjung Hospital along with Dr Richa Mishra, Dr Semanti Das, Dr Indra Shekhar Prasad and Dr Prakalp Gupta from All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi.

The cross-sectional survey was conducted among 1,566 healthcare workers from diverse medical institutions across India using a pre-tested, self-administered online questionnaire, which assessed various dimensions of workplace safety. Logistic regression was used to find differences among groups.

The survey participants consisted of 869 (55.5 per cent) females and 697 (44.5 per cent) males. About one-fourth (24.7 per cent) of healthcare workers were from Delhi and around half of the them were resident doctors (49.6 per cent), followed by undergraduate medical students, including interns (15.9 per cent).

Responses were also received from faculty members, medical officers, nursing staff, and other supporting staff.

The majority of the respondents worked in government-run medical colleges (71.5 per cent). Half of the respondents worked in non-surgical departments (49.2 per cent) and one-third worked in surgical departments (33.8 per cent).

Results revealed that more than half (58.2 per cent) of healthcare workers feel unsafe at the workplace and 78.4 per cent reported having been threatened on duty, Dr Jugal Kishore, the corresponding author of the study said.

Nearly half of the healthcare workers do not have a dedicated duty room while working for long hours or at night.

The existing duty rooms are grossly inadequate in providing the basic amenities and services such as regular cleaning, pest control, ventilation, room space, and air conditioning, Dr Kishore stated.

A staggering majority of healthcare workers expressed "deep dissatisfaction" with the existing security measures in health institutions across India, he said.

Over 70 per cent felt security personnel were ineffective, and 62 per cent reported the emergency alarm system to be inadequate. Nearly half reported severe gaps in access control, surveillance, and security in high-risk areas like ICUs and psychiatric wards.

Over 90 per cent of institutions lack proper screening for weapons or dangerous objects, and nearly three-fourths reported the absence of secure hospital boundaries. These findings paint a "dire picture of insufficient security" in critical healthcare settings, putting both workers and patients at risk, Dr Kishore said.

"A striking difference in security satisfaction emerged between private and public medical colleges, with state government institutions showing the highest dissatisfaction," Dr Kishore said.

Over 63 per cent of respondents in state government medical colleges were unhappy with the number of security personnel, with a four times higher likelihood of dissatisfaction compared to private colleges.

Nearly 70 per cent criticised poor emergency alarms, access control, and security in high-risk areas, where dissatisfaction was more than 3.5 times higher.

"While central government colleges fared somewhat better, they were still up to twice as likely to experience dissatisfaction compared to private institutions," Dr Kishore elaborated.

Besides, an alarming 81.3 per cent of healthcare workers reported witnessing violence, yet nearly half (44.1 per cent) felt these incidents were handled poorly.

About 80 per cent of respondents didn't know who to contact in case of an emergency, and over 70 per cent lacked a clear, confidential Aprocess for reporting security concerns.

To address these challenges, the study recommended strengthening security in high-risk areas, increasing the number of security personnel, improving duty room conditions, and implementing clear violence-handling protocols.

Regular security training and collaboration with national agencies to advocate for legal frameworks were also suggested. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Man held for Israeli embassy attack plot in Germany

BERLIN, 20 OCT

German authorities have arrested a man with suspected ties to the extremist group Islamic State who was allegedly planning an attack on the Israeli Embassy in Berlin. The man was detained on Saturday. The German news agency dpa reported that the suspect was expected to be brought before an investigating judge at the country's highest court, the Federal Court of Justice in Karlsruhe, on Sunday. Israeli Ambassador Ron Prosor thanked the German security authorities "for ensuring the security of our embassy". News of the case first came from the Bild newspaper, which reported that a heavily armed elite police unit stormed the suspect's apartment in Bernau and that police raided an apartment in connection with the case. *—PTI*

Iraq's Kurdish region goes to elections

IRBIL, 20 OCT

Residents of Iraq's semi-autonomous northern Kurdish region went to the polls in long-awaited Parliamentary elections on Sunday under the shadow of ongoing rivalries, economic instability, and unresolved disputes with Baghdad. The primary competitors are the two dominant Kurdish parties: the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP)and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). Historically, these two parties have controlled different parts of the region, with the KDP overseeing Irbil and Dohuk, and the PUK governing Sulaymaniyah. This division has frequently led to political deadlock. The Parliamentary elections, originally set for 2022, were postponed several times amid disputes over the election law and procedures. *—PTI*

Hurricane Oscar forms off the Bahamas

MIAMI, 20 OCT

Hurricane Oscar formed Saturday off the coast of the Bahamas, the National Hurricane Centre in Miami said. It characterised the storm as "tiny." The government of the Bahamas has issued a hurricane warning for the Turks and Caicos Islands and the southeastern Bahamas. The government of Cuba has issued a hurricane watch for the provinces of Guantanamo, Holguin, and Las Tunas. The storm's maximum sustained winds were clocked at 130 kph with higher gusts. . Hours earlier, Tropical Storm Nadine formed off Mexico's southern Caribbean coast and was moving inland across Belize. Heavy rain were occurring over parts of Belize and the Yucatan peninsula. *—PTI*

Georgia ferry dock accident kills 7, several injured

GEORGIA, 20 OCT

At least seven people died, and several others were injured after a ferry dock walkway collapsed in the US state of Georgia on Saturday, authorities said. The accident on Sapelo Island caused about 20 people to fall into the Atlantic waters, prompting search and rescue efforts by the US Coast Guard and other agencies. The Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) said in a statement that there were seven reported fatalities. DNR spokesperson Tyler Jones later added that eight people were taken to hospitals, at least six of them with critical injuries. The agency operates the dock and ferry boats that transport people between the island and the mainland. Helicopters and boats were engaged in the search-and-rescue operations. ***—DW News***

Israel intensifies strikes in Beirut, Gaza

Netanyahu warns Hezbollah for 'grave mistake' after a drone targeted his residence

BIERUT, 20 OCT

Israel has launched several air attacks on Beirut's southern suburbs after the Lebanese armed group Hezbollah fired volleys of rockets at northern Israel with one drone targeting Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu 's holiday home.

Hezbollah did not claim responsibility for the Caesarea drone attack but said it carried out several rocket attacks on northern and central Israel.

Meanwhile, warning Hezbollah for the "grave mistake" after a drone from Lebanon targeted his private residence, Netanyahu said the "assassination" attempt will not deter him or Israel to "eliminate" the terrorists and "those who dispatch them."

He and his wife Sara were not at home at the time of the attack.

Two other drones that were fired from Lebanon on Saturday morning were downed by Israel's air defences, triggering sirens in Tel Aviv, according to The Times of Israel report.

On X, Netanyahu wrote, "The attempt by Iran's proxy Hezbollah to assassinate me and my wife today was a grave mistake. This will not deter me or the State of Israel from continuing our just war against our enemies in order to secure our future." Israeli strikes on multiple homes in the northern Gaza Strip overnight and into Sunday left at least 87 people dead or missing, the territory's Health Ministry said. *—Agencies*

Smoke rises from Israeli airstrikes on Dahiyeh, in the southern suburb of Beirut, Lebanon, on early Sunday **PHOTO: PTI**

ISIS made us eat babies: Yazidi woman

JERUSALEM, 20 OCT

Two weeks after being rescued from Gaza by IDF, Yazidi survivor Fawzia Amin said that they were fed what they later learned was the flesh of Yazidi babies. "One woman suffered heart failure and died shortly after," Sido said, adding that one mother even recognised her own child because of the baby's hands. Yazidi women were enslaved by ISIS in 2014 during the group's reign of terror.

TALES FROM THE TUNNELS

IDF in a newly released video which was recorded before the attack on Israel on 7 October, 2023, shows slain Hamas chief Yahya Sinwar walking in a tunnel and his wife carrying a handbag worth USD 32,000 **PHOTO: SCREENGRAB**

US probes leak of Israel attack plans

WASHINGTON, 20 OCT

The US is investigating an unauthorised release of classified documents that assess Israel's plans to attack Iran. The documents are attributed to the US Geospatial Intelligence Agency and National Security Agency and note that Israel continues to move military assets in place to conduct a military strike in response to Iran's blistering ballistic missile attack on 1 October. They were sharable within the "Five Eyes," which are the US, Great Britain, Canada, New Zealand and Australia.

The documents, which are marked top secret, were posted online to Telegram and first reported by CNN and Axios. The investigation is also examining how the documents were obtained — including whether it was an intentional leak by a member of the US intelligence community or obtained by another method, like a hack — and whether any other intelligence information was compromised, the official said. As part of that investigation, officials are working to determine who had access to the documents before they were posted, the official said.

In a statement, the Pentagon said it was aware of the reports of the documents but did not have further comment. *—PTI*

Kyiv launches more than 100 drones over Russia

KYIV, 20 OCT

Russian air defences shot down more than 100 Ukrainian drones Sunday over Russia's western regions, Moscow officials said, while 17 people were injured in the Ukrainian city of Kryvyi Rih in a ballistic missile attack.

The Russian Defence Ministry said 110 drones were destroyed in the overnight barrage against seven Russian regions. Many targeted Russia's border region of Kursk, where 43 drones were reportedly shot down.

Social media footage appeared to show air defences at work over the city of Dzerzhinsk in the Nizhny Novgorod region, close to a factory producing explosives.

The attack on late Saturday evening damaged homes and businesses. *—PTI*

Ukrainian servicemen of Khartia brigade fire D-30 Howitzer towards Russian positions in Kharkiv region, in Ukraine **PHOTO: PTI**

Ukraine's 'victory plan' gets divided replies from West

KYIV, 20 OCT

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's plan to end Ukraine's nearly three-year war with Russia has received mixed reactions from Western allies so far.

The "victory plan" that Zelenskyy outlined at home and abroad includes a formal invitation for Ukraine to join NATO and permission to use Western long-range missiles to strike military targets in Russia — two steps Kyiv's allies have been reluctant to support before.

US reaction was muted and noncommittal, though it did issue a new USD 425 million package of security assistance for Ukraine the day that Zelenskyy presented the plan to lawmakers.

French Foreign Minister Jean-Noël Barrot stated in Kyiv on Saturday that he will work with Ukrainian officials to rally other nations to get behind the proposal.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz stood by his refusal to supply Taurus long-range cruise missiles to Kyiv.

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán called Zelenskyy's plan "more than frightening" in a Facebook post.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov mocked Zelenskyy's plan as "ephemeral," and Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova called it "a set of incoherent slogans." *—PTI*

Maldives notifies new foreign currency rules

MALE, 20 OCT

Dollar-starved Maldives has floated a new foreign currency regulation, limiting types of transactions allowed in foreign currency and imposing mandatory foreign currency exchange controls on tourism establishments and banks.

Maldivian economy appears to have taken a hit after calls to Indian tourists to avoid the picturesque island nation as a response to President Mohamed Muizzu's 'India Out' campaign last year.

Maldives last month averted a potential default on an Islamic bond payment after India extended a USD 50 million interest-free loan. *—PTI*

Kamala most prepared nominee: Obama

NEVADA, 20 OCT

Former US president **Barack Obama** at a campaign event in Las Vegas endorsed Vice President and Democratic presidential nominee Kamala Harris and emphasised her preparedness for the presidency.

He praised Harris as a "champion for those in need, steadfastly committed to the values that have shaped America."

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

Obama also said that Americans have an opportunity to shape the country's future by choosing a new generation of leaders, which will help in building a better, stronger, fairer, and more equal America. He further noted that America has been grappling with issues like pandemic leading to a surge in prices and impacting families.

Obama emphasised that Republican candidate Donald Trump's strategy is to make Americans believe the country is deeply divided. *—ANI*

Trump kicks off rally with Palmer story

LATROBE, 20 OCT

Republican candidate **Donald Trump** kicked off his rally with a detailed story about Arnold Palmer, at one point even praising the late, legendary golfer's genitalia.

Trump was campaigning in Latrobe, Pennsylvania, where Palmer was born in 1929 and learned to golf from his father, who suffered from polio and was head pro and greenskeeper at the local country club. "Palmer was all man, and I say that in all due respect to women," he said.

He slammed Harris as "crazy" and added a profanity.

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

Musk supports Trump

Tesla CEO Elon Musk said his Trump-supporting group will give USD 1million every day until election day to someone who signs his petition that effectively encourages Republicans in the key battleground states to register to vote. *—Agencies*

PAK SET TO APPROVE KEY AMENDMENT BILL

ISLAMABAD, 20 OCT

The Pakistan cabinet will meet on Sunday to review and approve the final draft of the 'much-touted' 26th Constitutional Amendment.

The government has not officially shared the details of the constitutional amendment with the media or discussed them publically, but according to reports, its alleged objective is to dilute the power of an independent judiciary.

Reports indicate that the government plans to raise the retirement age for judges and fix the tenure of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.

The two houses of the Parliament should separately pass the bill with a two-thirds majority for it to become law. *—PTI*

Subianto is Indonesia's eighth Prez

JAKARTA, 20 OCT

Prabowo Subianto was inaugurated on Sunday as the eighth president of the world's most populous Muslim-majority nation, completing his journey from an ex-general accused of rights abuses during the dark days of Indonesia's military dictatorship to the presidential palace.

The former defence minister, was cheered through the streets by thousands of supporters after taking his oath on the Quran, in front of lawmakers and foreign dignitaries. Banners and billboards to welcome the new president filled the streets of the capital, Jakarta, where tens of thousands gathered for festivities including speeches and musical performances along the city's major throughfare.

Subianto was a longtime rival of the immensely popular President Joko Widodo, who ran against him for the presidency twice and refused to accept his defeat on both occasions, in 2014 and 2019.

Subianto will lead a massive, diverse archipelago nation whose economy has boomed amid strong global demand for its natural resources. *—PTI*

Prabowo Subianto **PHOTO: PTI**

ARMED VIOLENCE

Cameroon conflict shuts down schools

YAOUNDE, 20 OCT

Jane Ndamei's dreams of becoming a medical doctor almost cost her life five years ago.

The 20-year-old student from Cameroon's restive southwestern region was taking her Grade 12 exam when she suddenly heard gunshots. Shortly after, armed men rushed into the school, forcing Ndamei and her peers to flee the examination hall.

"It was the sound of death and I really thought I wouldn't make it. I prayed silently for a miracle," she recalled.

Ndamei, 15 at the time, was one among 2.8 million children in West and Central Africa whose education was put on hold by violent conflict in recent years, according to the United Nations. More than 14,000 schools were closed due to violence and insecurity across 24 countries in West and Central Africa as of June.

As of 2023, the separatist crisis in west Cameroon and incursions by the Boko Haram extremist group in the north left 1.4 million school-age children in dire need of educational assistance. The UN said that in 2019, the year Ndamei's school was attacked, 855,000 children were out of school in northwest and southwest Cameroon, where armed separatist groups targeted schools.

The Central African nation has been plagued by fighting since English-speaking separatists launched a rebellion in 2017, with the stated goal of breaking away from the area dominated by the French-speaking majority and setting up an independent, English-speaking state. Separatist fighters, opposed to the French-speaking education system organised by the central government, have killed and abducted students and teachers, burned and looted school buildings, and intimidated families into keeping their children out of school.

Ndamei moved to the French-speaking and stay with extended family members in order to continue her education. She is now enrolled in a university nursing programme. *—PTI*

14,000 schools were closed due to violence and insecurity across 24 countries in Africa as of June **PHOTO: X@YOURANONCENTRAL**

Cuba gets some power back after major blackout

HAVANA, 20 OCT

Cuban government on Saturday said that some electricity was restored in Cuba, after the island nation's worst blackout in at least two years kicked in when a major power plant failed and left millions without electricity for two days.

Energy Minister Vicente de la O Levy said the country had 500 megawatts in its electrical grid early Saturday, compared to the three gigawatts that are normally generated. He posted on the social media platform X that "several substations in the west now have electricity."

O Levy also said two thermoelectric power plants are back and two more will resume their operations "in the next few hours." About half of Cuba was plunged into darkness on Thursday evening, followed by the entire island on Friday morning after the plant failed.

The streets of Cuba's capital, where 2 million people live, were quiet on Saturday, with few cars driving by after a night that was lit by candles and lamps. The impact of the blackout goes beyond lighting, as services like water supply also depend on electricity to run pumps. The blackout was considered to be Cuba's worst in two years. This year, some homes have spent up to eight hours a day without electricity. *—PTI*

PHOTO: AP

Automobile exports from India rise 14% in April-Sept

NEW DELHI, 20 OCT

Automobile exports from India in the first six months of the current fiscal year rose 14 per cent year-on-year, led by gains in shipments of passenger vehicles and two-wheelers. According to Siam data, the overall exports in the April-September period stood at 25,28,248 units, up 14 per cent as compared with 22,11,457 units in the year-ago period. Automobile exports declined 5.5 per cent in FY24 due to the monetary crisis in various overseas markets. Overall exports stood at 45,00,492 units in the last fiscal year as compared with 47,61,299 units in FY23. Total passenger vehicle shipments rose 12 per cent year-on-year to 3,76,679 units in the first half of the current fiscal year as against 3,36,754 units in the September quarter of FY24. —*PTI*

PHOTO: X

'2030 energy target may push India's imports to $30B'

NEW DELHI, 20 OCT

The country's target of installing 500 GW of renewable energy by 2030 may push solar equipment import bill to about USD 30 billion per year and increase dependence on Chinese goods, think tank GTRI said in a report on Sunday. It said developing a self-reliant solar manufacturing industry in India will require significant investment to create an integrated supply chain, especially in areas like polysilicon and wafer production. Without this, India may continue to face high import costs and struggle to meet its renewable energy goals. India installed 15 GW of solar capacity in 2023-24, raising the total to 90.8 GW by September, compared to just 2.8 GW in 2014, it said. —*PTI*

DIPAM asks to not trade in shares of state-owned firms

NEW DELHI, 20 OCT

Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) has asked its officials to refrain from trading in shares of public sector companies as they may be privy to market-sensitive information with regard to state-owned companies, an official said. In an internal order, the DIPAM said that any officer joining the department would be required to declare his/her holding in public sector enterprises and such shares could only be liquidated by the official concerned after approval from authorities. DIPAM, under the Ministry of Finance, manages government equity in public sector companies and is also responsible for undertaking minority stake sale, strategic and privatisation. —*PTI*

Expect easing of pressure from high rubber price: CEAT

NEW DELHI, 20 OCT

Homegrown tyre major CEAT Ltd expects easing of pressure from high raw material costs in the second half of the ongoing fiscal after being impacted by 15-year high domestic natural rubber prices, according to its Managing Director and CEO Arnab Banerjee. The company expects its aftermarket business to continue to grow in double digits and better performance of its international business, which was also affected by non-availability of containers and high freight cost in the second quarter. The domestic natural rubber prices went up to a 15-year high at about Rs 250 per kg in the first half of the fiscal, Banerjee told PTI. He further said, "Rubber prices have already come down to about Rs 200 per kg. While the increase Q2 over Q1 was six per cent, for Q3 over Q2 it is expected to be 1.5 per cent to 2 per cent." —*PTI*

CNG price may go up ₹4-6 on supply cut to gas retailers

CNG hike is also a political issue since polls are in Nov

NEW DELHI, 20 OCT

Government has slashed by up to 20 per cent the supplies of cheaper domestically produced natural gas to retailers PHOTO: PTI

The government has slashed by up to 20 per cent the supplies of cheaper domestically produced natural gas to city retailers -- a move that may result in Rs 4-6 per kg hike in the price of CNG sold to automobiles, unless excise duty on the fuel is cut, sources said.

Natural gas pumped from below the ground and from under the seabed from sites ranging from the Arabian Sea to Bay of Bengal within India is the raw material that is turned into CNG for sale to automobiles and piped cooking gas to households.

Production from legacy fields, whose price is regulated by the government and which are used to feed city gas retailers, has been falling by up to 5 per cent annually due to natural decline that has set in. This has led to supply cuts to city gas retailers, four sources in know of the matter said.

While the input gas for piped cooking gas that households get is protected, the government has cut supply of raw material for CNG. Gas from legacy fields used to meet 90 per cent of the demand for

CNG price hike is also a political issue since Maharashtra goes to the polls next month and elections are also due in Delhi soon. Delhi and Mumbai are among the biggest CNG markets in the country.

Sources said the gas supplies to city gas retailers had to be cut after the government decided to restore fuel to ONGC-promoted OPaL petrochemical plant in Dahej, Gujarat.

Indraprastha Gas Ltd, which retails CNG in the national capital, and Mumbai-based Mahanagar Gas Ltd in regulatory filings stated that supplies of domestically produced gas, which was available at a capped rate half of the imported price, has been cut.

Adani Total Gas Ltd -- the other significant city gas retailer -- in its filing said the APM priced domestic gas allocation to the company has been reduced by about 16 per cent, effective 16 October, 2024, compared to the earlier allocation. —*PTI*

DESPITE SLOW PACE

In Oct, FPI marks highest sell-off with ₹77,701 cr

NEW DELHI, 20 OCT

PHOTO: ANI

- The dynamic between foreign outflows and strong domestic participation underscores the growing importance of local investors

Foreign investors continued selling Indian equities this week, though at a slower pace compared to the previous week, according to data from the National Securities Depository Limited (NSDL).

Between 14 & 18 October, Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) sold Indian equities worth Rs 19,065.79 crore. This marks a significant reduction from the previous week, when FPIs offloaded equities worth Rs 31,568.03 crore.

Despite the slower sell-off, October has recorded the highest FPI outflows in recent history. So far this month, foreign investors have sold a net Rs77,701 crore in equities, surpassing the COVID-19-induced sell-off of March 2020, when Rs61,972.75 crore was offloaded. This makes October a historic month for heavy selling pressure by FPIs.

However, US economic data since then has shown a strong economy, with a 'no-landing' scenario. This has led to a strong US dollar, which has risen over the past three weeks. US yields have also increased. These factors have a negative correlation with emerging market flows. India's FII outflows were partly due to this, as well as the China stimulus announcement, which led to a sharp rise in Chinese markets."

Interestingly, despite the significant sell-off, key stock market indices like the Nifty 50 and Sensex have shown resilience. Both indices are down by only around 5 per cent from their 52-week highs, indicating strong support from domestic investors.

The dynamic between foreign outflows and strong domestic participation underscores the growing importance of local investors in stabilising the Indian stock market, even during periods of heavy global investor selling. —*ANI*

FPIs selling negatively impacted oil, gas and auto sectors

Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) have significantly impacted key sectors such as financial services, oil & gas, and automobiles with continued selling pressure, according to a report by the State Bank of India (SBI). The financial services sector was hit the hardest, with FPIs pulling out Rs 23,283 crore in the first 15 days of October. This marks a notable shift from September when FPIs had invested Rs 27,200 crore in the same sector. The oil, gas, and consumable fuels sector also suffered significant outflows, with FPIs withdrawing Rs 12,371 crore. Similarly, the automobile and auto components sector witnessed selling pressure, with outflows amounting to Rs 8,131 crore in October. The auto sector has been under consistent pressure, registering outflows of Rs 2,106 crore in September and Rs 2,379 crore in August, reflecting a sustained bearish sentiment. —*PTI*

Mcap of 4 of top-10 most valued firms jumps ₹81,151 cr last week

NEW DELHI, 20 OCT

ICICI Bank & HDFC Bank emerged big gainers PHOTO: PTI

Four of the top-10 most-valued firms together added Rs 81,151.31 crore in market valuation last week, with ICICI Bank and HDFC Bank emerging as the biggest gainers.

Last week, the BSE benchmark declined 156.61 points, or 0.19 per cent.

While HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel, ICICI Bank, and the State Bank of India were the gainers, Reliance Industries, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), Infosys, Hindustan Unilever, ITC, and Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) suffered a combined erosion of Rs 76,622.05 crore from their market valuation.

ICICI Bank added Rs 28,495.14 crore, taking its market valuation to Rs 8,90,191.38 crore.

The valuation of HDFC Bank jumped Rs 23,579.11 crore to Rs 12,82,848.30 crore.

State Bank of India's market valuation climbed Rs 17,804.61 crore to Rs 7,31,773.56 crore and that of Bharti Airtel went up Rs 11,272.45 crore to Rs 9,71,707.61 crore.

On the other hand, the market capitalisation (mcap) of Infosys slumped Rs 23,314.31 crore to Rs 7,80,126.10 crore.

The valuation of Reliance Industries declined Rs 16,645.39 crore to Rs 18,38,721.14 crore.

The mcap of Hindustan Unilever tumbled Rs 15,248.85 crore to Rs 6,38,066.75 crore and that of TCS diminished by Rs 10,402.01 crore to Rs 14,91,321.40 crore.

Reliance Industries continued to remain the most-valued domestic firm, followed by TCS, HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel, ICICI Bank, Infosys, State Bank of India, Hindustan Unilever, ITC, and LIC. —*PTI*

Indian pharma firms trail global peers in R&D

NEW DELHI, 20 OCT

Indian pharmaceutical firms are falling behind their global counterparts across key performance indicators, including R&D intensity, the proportion of PhD employees, and the number of patents and publications generated per billion USD of revenue, according to a report by the Foundation for Advancing Science and Technology (FAST India) in collaboration with IIFL Securities.

The largest disparity was observed in the number of publications per billion USD revenue, with global firms producing 8.4 times more publications than Indian firms, the report noted.

Global firms generated 5.6 times more patents and 8.4 times more publications per billion USD of revenue compared to Indian firms.

In terms of Research and Development (R&D) intensity, global firms outperformed Indian firms by a factor of 3.0, the report added. —*ANI*

Jindal Group in talks to acquire Vitkovice Steel

NEW DELHI, 20 OCT

PHOTO: ANI

To strengthen its global presence, homegrown Jindal Group is talks with Vitkovice Steel to acquire 100 per cent stake in the Czech-based company.

The group is expected to complete the acquisition by the end of this fiscal year through its arm Jindal Steel International, sources said.

It will be Jindal Group's first acquisition in Europe.

The Naveen Jindal-owned business house already has significant presence in geographies like Australia, Mozambiquie and Oman in sectors such as steel, power and mining.

"The management of the two sides are in active talks for the deal. As part of the deal, Jindal Group will acquire 100 per cent stake in Vitkovice Steel. This will be Jindal Group's first acquisition in Europe," industry sources said.

As per sources, the deal size could be of about 150 million euros (around Rs 1,000 crore), they said.

The acquisition of Vitkovice Steel will help the Jindal Group to make a foothold in the European market, which is putting checks in the form of CBAM (carbon border adjustment tax) to promote green steel.

The group is also setting up a hydrogen-based steel manufacturing unit through its arm Vulcan Green Steel (VGS) in Oman. —*PTI*

Tap water in rural areas surged by 5 times: Report

NEW DELHI, 20 OCT

Tap water connections for rural households in India have increased fivefold over the last five years, according to a report by SBI.

The report attributes this remarkable progress to the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM), launched on 15 August, 2019, with the aim of providing tap water to every rural household by 2024.

According to the report's data, rural households with tap water connections reached 15.20 crore in October 2024. At the time of the JJM's launch, only 3.23 crore rural households had access to tap water.

Over the past five years, the initiative has made significant progress, supplying tap water to an additional 11.96 crore households, raising the total to over 15.20 crore rural homes. —*ANI*

FROM CENTRE TO STATES

Grant-in-aid, tax devolution will moderate at 4.5%: NSE

NEW DELHI, 20 OCT

PHOTO: ANI

State governments across India are expected to face tighter finances in FY25, as grants-in-aid from the Centre are projected to decline by 6.3 per cent, and will moderate at 4.5% according to NSE report.

The report noted that this is a significant change compared to the 13.9 per cent growth in these grants seen in FY24. This drop in grants, which are a crucial part of non-tax revenues for many states, could place financial pressure on those heavily dependent on central support.

The reduction in grants is particularly concerning for states that rely heavily on this source of income. States in eastern and northeastern regions--such as Meghalaya, Mizoram, Himachal Pradesh, and Assam--are among the most affected.

The report highlighted that these states receive a significant portion of their revenue from grants-in-aid, with such grants constituting between 25 per cent and 40 per cent of their total revenue receipts.

This overall reduction in central assistance, combined with other financial pressures, means states may need to adopt more stringent financial management strategies to ensure they can meet their expenditure needs. —*ANI*

Q2 results, foreign investors are key market drivers

NEW DELHI, 20 OCT

Quarterly earnings from corporates, global trends, and trading activity of foreign investors will guide market sentiment this week, analysts said, adding that benchmark indices may face volatile trends.

HDFC Bank on Saturday reported a 6 per cent increase in September quarter net profit to Rs 17,825.91 crore on a consolidated basis.

On a standalone basis, the largest private sector lender's post-tax net grew to Rs 16,820.97 crore during the reporting period, as against Rs 15,976.11 crore in the year-ago period.

On a standalone basis, the private sector lender's net profit for the quarter grew 5 per cent to Rs 3,344 crore, limited by a jump in provisions. —*PTI*

ANALYSTS OPINE

Firms see AI as a competitive advantage

NEW DELHI, 20 OCT

28 per cent have seen benefits in personalised campaigns, but data privacy remains a hurdle for 22 per cent PHOTO: PTI

A significant percentage of organisations see Artificial Intelligence as key to competitive advantage and said they have experienced a notable boost in productivity through AI integration, according to a new report.

According to the "Industry 5.0 and AI report", compiled by BML Munjal University, 44 pc of organisations have experienced a significant boost in productivity through AI integration.

Additionally, 21 per cent reported that AI can play a pivotal role in driving innovation, enabling the development of new products, services and business models, particularly in sectors like finance, healthcare, manufacturing and marketing.

"Approximately 33 per cent of organisations focus on product development, while 29 per cent leverage AI for customer service through chatbots and robotic process automation (RPA). Marketing teams, representing 19 per cent of businesses, utilize AI for trend analysis, while 13 per cent apply AI to improve supply chain management," the report added.

Based on responses from 1,000 professionals and in-depth interviews with 50 industry experts, the report highlighted a significant shift in how businesses are integrating AI into their strategies.

While AI has delivered numerous benefits, the report also highlights some key challenges.

AI's impact varies by sector; in mergers and acquisitions, 28 per cent have seen benefits in personalised campaigns, but data privacy remains a hurdle for 22 per cent. IT and augmented reality sectors report enhanced productivity (44 per cent) but struggle with talent shortages.

"There are also ethical concerns, with 20 pc of respondents mentioning algorithmic bias and 22 pc expressing worries about data privacy. These issues show the need for responsible AI governance, prompting 38.3 pc of organisations to adopt ethical AI guidelines to ensure transparency," it said. —*PTI*

Borosil Group expects to cross ₹7K cr revenue in 4 yrs

JAIPUR, 20 OCT

PHOTO: X

Borosil, which operates in glassware, laboratory equipment and solar glasses, is expecting to double its revenue to Rs 7,000 crore in the next four years, led by double-digit growth from across its business verticals, its Executive Vice Chairman Shreevar Kheruka has said.

The Kheruka-family promoted Borosil Group, which operates with three listed entities under its fold -- Borosil Ltd, Borosil Renewables Ltd, and Borosil Technologies Ltd -- expects to reach a revenue close to Rs 3,500 crore in FY25.

It plans to invest Rs 250 crore for expansion and capacity augmentation to meet the demand, in which it intends to invest about Rs 150 crore on a new plant in Gujarat for Borosil Ltd, which is in the business of products such as glassware and cookware, said Kheruka.

Besides, at its Jaipur unit, where Borosil has already invested Rs 450 crore to expand the production capacity, it has plans to invest Rs 100 crore for debottlenecking to improve efficiency and increase capacity further.

For the financial year ended on 31 March, 2024, Borosil Ltd, posted a revenue of Rs 942.25 crore, while Borosil Renewables had a consolidated revenue of Rs 1,369.28 crore.

Borosil Scientific, had a consolidated revenue of Rs 394.57 crore in FY24. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Overnight leader Bhullar finishes T-7 in Thailand

BANGKOK, 20 OCT

Indian golfer Gaganjeet Bhullar dropped a crucial double bogey and a bogey over the last 11 holes to finish T-7 in the Black Mountain Championship. Bhullar, 19-under after three days, could not find a birdie on the final nine and instead gave away a bogey and carded even par 72 to stay at 19-under. The 11-time Asian Tour winner Bhullar dropped to tied-seventh, which was still his best this season but disappointing considering he led by three shots after three rounds. Little-known Michael Maguire (USA) shot a 7-under 65 and tied with his in-form compatriot John (66) at 23-under before winning the playoff.—*PTI*

India U17 squad for AFC Asian Cup Qualifiers picked

NEW DELHI, 20 OCT

India U17 men's national team head coach Ishfaq Ahmed, on Sunday, named a 23-member squad for the AFC U17 Asian Cup 2025 Qualifiers to be held in Thailand from 23-27 October. India is placed in Group D, where they will meet Brunei Darussalam (23 October), and Turkmenistan (25 October) and host Thailand (27 October).There are 10 groups in the qualification phase, from which the group winners and five best second-placed teams will join hosts Saudi Arabia at the AFC U17 Asian Cup 2025. India's 23-member squad for the AFC U17 Asian Cup 2025 Qualifiers: Goalkeepers: Aheibam Suraj Singh, Rohit, Nandan Roy. Defenders: Karish Soram, Mohamed Kaif, Chingtham Renin Singh, Brahmacharimayum Sumit Sharma, Thoungamba Usham Singh, Yaipharemba Chingakham, Jodric Abranches. Midfielders: Abdul Salha Sheergojri, Ahongshangbam Samson, Kh Azlaan Shah, Levis Zangminlun, Mahmad Sami, Manbhakupar Malngiang, Md Arbash, Ningthoukhongjam Rishi Singh.—*PTI*

PHOTO: TWITTER

Pavlovic undergoes surgery on a broken collarbone

MUNICH, 20 OCT

Bayern Munich midfielder Aleksandar Pavlovic has undergone surgery after breaking his collarbone in Saturday's 4-0 win over Stuttgart, the club said Sunday. Pavlovic went off injured in the eighth minute after landing heavily on his shoulder and the injury is set to rule out the Germany international for "the coming weeks," the club said. Bayern said a post-game examination confirmed the injury and that Pavlovic successfully underwent surgery Sunday morning.—*PTI*

NZ register historic win over India

New Zealand ended a 36-year-long wait to taste Test success in India

BENGALURU, 20 OCT

New Zealand survived a hostile Jasprit Bumrah spell to foil India's attempt to add a final-day twist to an absorbing series-opener, slaying the cricketing giants at home by eight wickets and ending a 36-year-long wait to taste Test success in the country, here Sunday.

All-rounder Washington Sundar was on Sunday added to the India squad for the remaining two Tests against New Zealand.

This is the Kiwis' first Test win on Indian soil after the John Wright-led outfit tore India apart by 136 runs at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai in 1988.

Even hunting a modest 107 on the fifth day against a world-class attack could be nervy, and New Zealand did that after some initial scares.

Will Young (48 not out) and Rachin Ravindra (39 not out) fuelled their chase with a 75-run stand for the third wicket, holding a 1-0 lead in the three-match series.

However, the Indians will not be an entirely despondent lot despite the defeat as they showed admirable spunk to claw back from the depths of getting bowled out for 46 in the first innings. They will need to build on it pretty quickly as the second Test at Pune starts on 24 October.

The Rohit Sharma-marshalled side will also have to think deeply about retaining Sarfaraz Khan, who made a 150 in the second dig, as Shubman Gill is poised to return after recovering from a stiff neck.

New Zealand's victory did not come without its share of drama once the day's play started at 10.15 am, a wet outfield pushing back the proceedings by an hour.

Kuldeep, who gave away 26 runs in three overs, had replaced Akash DeepDevon Conway, the other overnight batter, was shaky throughout his stay and would consider himself fortunate to have found a last-minute edge on a Bumrah skidder that otherwise would have trapped him plumb in front. But as luck would have it, the ball beat the gully fielder and raced to the fence.

However, the left-hander eventually reached the road's end when Bumrah, operating from around the stumps, caught him right in front of the wicket with another one that skidded and swung back into him.

New Zealand was 35 for two at that point, and one would say the match was in the balance as a couple of more strikes could have left the cat among the pigeons.

But Young and Ravindra, the first-innings centurion, found some solidity to resist the Indian charge. Ravindra Jadeja, who started with a no-ball, too did not make much of an impression, conceding 14 runs in his first two overs. There was not much on the Chinnaswamy pitch for him to exploit either as the 22-yard track did not disintegrate on the final day, courtesy of rain and cooler climes here.

The defining moment came when Will Young turned Jadeja for two to collect the winning runs as Kiwi's dressing room turned into a hub of celebration.

New Zealand **skipper Tom Latham** reminded his team not to lose focus on the second Test amid the revelries after winning the first match, as India has the firepower in its ranks to hit back.

The Kiwis defeated India by eight wickets here on Sunday in the first Test to take a 1-0 lead in the series, but they will now have to prepare for the second match, beginning at Pune on 24 October.

This was their first Test victory in India after 1988, and overall just the third win in red-ball format on these shores.

"I think 36 years is the last time that we've won here. So, it's a really special feeling to be in this position. It's a proud moment for this group and one we'll celebrate," Latham said in the post-match press conference.

Brief Scores

New Zealand 402 (Ravindra 134, Conway 91, Jadeja 3-72) and 110 for 2 (Young 48*, Ravindra 39*, Bumrah 2-29) beat India 46 (Pant 20, Henry 5-15, O'Rourke 4-22) and 462 (Sarfaraz 150, Pant 99, O'Rourke 3-92) by eight wickets.

—*PTI*

New Zealand's Rachin Ravindra and Will Young celebrate after winning the first Test cricket match between India and New Zealand at M Chinnaswamy Stadium, in Bengaluru, on Sunday PHOTO: PTI

New Zealand skipper Tom Latham

Shami has a lengthy bowling session

Senior India pacer Mohammed Shami on Sunday bowled close to an hour at nets without any palpable discomfort, indicating progress in his recovery process after surgery earlier this year.Shami came to the nets after India's first Test against New Zealand here and bowled under the watchful eyes of bowling coach Morne Morkel. The 34-year-old, whose last outing in national colors was in the ODI World Cup final 2023, bowled to India assistant coach Abhishek Nayar.

India will not change their newfound aggressive approach towards Test cricket after just one defeat

-Skipper Rohit Sharma

WTC: India remain on top

India loosened their grip somewhat but continued to lead the World Test Championship (WTC) standings, despite suffering an eight-wicket defeat to New Zealand in the three-match series opener here on Sunday. India's percentage dropped to 68.06 percent after the humbling experience in Bengaluru, and they will now look to get their act together before the upcoming two Tests and the ensuing five-match series in Australia at the end of the year. The Black Caps chased down their victory target of 107 with relative ease, with the win catapulting the side from sixth up to fourth on the updated standings with a win-loss percentage of 44.44 percent.

Sultan of Johor Cup: India beat GB 6-4

JOHOR BAHRU, 20 OCT

Dilraj Singh and Sharda Nand Tiwari scored a brace each as the Indian junior men's hockey team continued its winning run, defeating Great Britain 6-4 in a high-scoring game at the Sultan of Johor Cup here on Sunday.

Mohd Konain's Dad (7th minute) opened India's account before Dilraj (17th, 50th), and Sharda Nand (20th, 50th) struck.

Manmeet Singh (26th) also scored for India, while Rory Penrose (2nd, 15th) and Michael Royden (46h, 59th) put their names on the scoreboard for Great Britain.

High on confidence after their opening match win against Japan on Saturday.

Though they suffered an early setback, when a defensive error cost them dearly in the second minute of the game with Penrose scoring from Britain's first penalty corner, India bounced back in the seventh minute with a goal by Dad from a set piece.

Great Britain, however, regained their lead in the 15th minute when Penrose scored his second goal through another penalty corner.—*PTI*

The Indian team maintained their strong performance and dominated the game from the very beginning PHOTO: HOCKEY INDIA/X

BMW LADIES C'SHIP

Hannah leads from start to finish, wins

JOHOR BAHRU, 20 OCT

Hannah Green of Australia shot a 1-under 71 on Sunday to win the BMW Ladies Championship in South Korea, her sixth victory on the LPGA Tour and her third this season. Green finished at 19-under 269 for the tournament and led or shared the lead after all four rounds. Celine Boutier of France finished a stroke behind Green on Sunday, shooting a 6-under 66. Chanettee Wannasaen of Thailand shot 68 and was two shots behind the winner.

Two golfers tied for fourth and finished three strokes behind Hye-Jin Choi (67) of South Korea and compatriot Yu Jin Sung (72). "The putt on 17, I was very nervous," said Green, who needed to do something special after Boutier's 66 put her in the clubhouse at 18 under. —*PTI*

Hannah Green PHOTO: X

Cheptegei wins Vedanta Delhi Half Marathon race

NEW DELHI, 20 OCT

Long-distance running great Joshua Cheptegei of Uganda won the men's elite race at the Vedanta Delhi Half Marathon on Sunday, his maiden international title over the 21.097km distance and also his first crown in a road race after retiring from the track.

Since making his international debut in Bengaluru 10 years back. The 28-year-old Cheptegei, who made his international debut in India at the TCS World 10K Bengaluru 2014 where he finished second, clocked an impressive 59 minute 46 seconds to win the race. —*PTI*

RANJI TROPHY

Aniket shines in Rajasthan's win

DHARAMSALA, 20 OCT

Left-arm pacer Aniket Choudhary took a five-wicket haul as Rajasthan romped to an eight-wicket win over Himachal Pradesh in a Ranji Trophy Group B game here on Sunday. Resuming overnight at 147 for two after following on, Himachal ended up with 260 in their second innings to avoid an innings defeat. Set a tiny target of 25, Rajasthan completed victory in 5.2 overs.

It was Rajasthan's first outright win of the season having earned three points for the first-innings lead in the drawn opener against Puducherry.

Himachal number three Ankit Kalsi tried his best to delay the inevitable with 57 off 93 balls. Choudhary was deservingly named player of the match as his five wickets came after three strikes in the first innings. Deepak Chahar was the standout bowler for the visitors in the first innings. —*PTI*

Aniket Choudhary PHOTO: PTI

Man City beat struggling Wolves 2-1

LONDON, 20 OCT

John Stones came up with an injury-time goal again as Manchester City narrowly avoided a major setback by beating struggling Wolverhampton Wanderers 2-1 in the Premier League on Sunday.

Stones headed home a corner in the fifth minute of second-half injury time and the goal stood despite the VAR asking referee Chris Kavanagh to review whether Bernardo Silva was interfering with goalkeeper Jose Sa from an off-side position. Kavanagh's decision denied Wolves just a second point of the season and enraged manager Gary O'Neil on the sidelines, while the win put City two points ahead of Liverpool ahead of its home game against Chelsea later Sunday.City defender Josko Gvardiol had curled in a superb right-foot shot from outside the area to equalize in the 33rd minute. But, Wolves then repelled wave after wave of City attacks before the late intervention from Stones, who also netted a last-gasp equalizer against Arsenal in the eighth minute of injury time last month.Jorgen Strand Larsen had given the hosts an early lead. —*PTI*

John Stones came up with an injury-time goal PHOTO: X / @MANCITY

US GRAND PRIX

Norris delighted after beating Max

Lando Norris

AUSTIN, 20 OCT

Lando Norris oozed satisfaction on Saturday after beating series leader and three-time champion Max Verstappen to pole position for Sunday's United States Grand Prix.

The McLaren driver clocked a best lap in one minute and 32.330 seconds to outpace his Red Bull rival, who leads the title race by 54 points with six races remaining, by 0.031 seconds. "It was a beautiful lap," said Norris, after claiming his first American pole and his fourth pole in five races as he seeks to overhaul Verstappen.

"I was not going to go much quicker than I did. When you just do a lap and you think 'damn, it's going to be tough to beat that' ... I put everything out on the line and it's what we needed to do. "We've been on the back foot pretty much the whole weekend. We've not had the pace of the Ferraris or the Red Bulls, so I had to do something, and today I did that so yeah, a cool lap and a nice way to start the race!"

He added that he enjoyed the sensation of the speed experienced at the Circuit of the Americas. "Inside you're like 'damn, this is fast' and it's exciting and it just gives you a good feeling, it's bumpy and it's fast, especially sector one so it puts a smile on your face, and ending quickest puts the biggest smile on your face too." He said it had been a tough weekend for McLaren.

"A tough day, a tough weekend for us, but we changed quite a bit, I think we reviewed everything we could and we made the improvements we needed to make, so maybe we weren't the quickest car out there today. —*AP*

Don't leave tennis, Djokovic tells Nadal

PARIS, 20 OCT

Novak Djokovic implored long-time adversary Rafael Nadal to put off his planned retirement after defeating the Spaniard Saturday in what was likely to be the final chapter of their "amazing rivalry". "Don't leave tennis, man," Djokovic said in an on-court interview after beating Nadal in straight sets 6-2, 7-6 (7/5) at the "Six Kings Slam" exhibition in Saudi Arabia. He added that their battles over the years had been "very intense" and told Nadal he hoped they could one day "sit on a beach somewhere" and have a drink.

Nadal, 38, announced on 10 October that he would retire from tennis after the Davis Cup Finals in Malaga next month.

Organizers of the Saudi event billed Saturday's match as perhaps Nadal's last singles contest as a professional. Nadal said Thursday he was unsure whether he would be fit enough to play singles in Malaga. Djokovic and Nadal two of the sport's famed "Big Three" along with Roger Federer had faced each other 60 times on the main tour before Saturday's exhibition match, with Djokovic holding a narrow 31-29 edge. Their last encounter came during the Paris Olympics on the same Roland Garros courts where Nadal won 14 French Open titles, though Djokovic triumphed easily 6-1, 6-4. Djokovic has racked up 24 Grand Slam titles in his career, two more than Nadal. Saturday's match was mostly one-sided, with Nadal spraying errors and Djokovic wrapping up the first set in just 31 minutes. Feeding off the support of the partisan crowd who openly cheered Djokovic's double-faults, Nadal rallied to push the second set to a tie-break, reeling off winners and even treating fans to one last iconic fist pump before succumbing to Djokovic. —*AP*

Novak Djokovic and Rafael Nadal